AN IMMORTAL SOUL

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AN IMMORTAL SOUL

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AN IMMORTAL SOUL

BY

W. H. MALLOCK

AUTHOR OF

"A HUMAN DOCUMENT," "THE INDIVIDUALIST," ETC.



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PREFACE

Writers of fiction not infrequently seek to justify the introduction of startling coincidences, or extraordinary eccentricities of character into their novels, by informing their readers that these strange things are facts; and all sensible critics agree in regarding this justification as no justification at all. The reason is that fiction ought properly to confine itself to incidents and types of character which are more or less generally representative; whereas mere oddities or curiosities of character or incident represent nothing but themselves, and have no significance of a general kind whatever.

The following work turns on a class of occurrences no less rare than any of the unlikelihoods to which reference has just been made; but they differ from these unlikelihoods in one fundamental particular. Instead of representing nothing but themselves, they represent or throw light upon the constitution of human nature at large. Whatever their significance may ultimately prove to be, it is a significance of the utmost moment, and their entire value or interest, as introduced into a work of fiction, depends on their unadorned fidelity to dry scientific fact. It may, therefore, be appropriately said here, without any parade of detailed references to authorities, that every abnormal incident introduced into the present work is in close accordance with phenomena observed and recorded by scientific students during the last quarter of a century, and especially during the last ten years. The work was begun some years ago, and has been cast experimentally by the Author into several forms, his aim having been to provide phenomena which are representative, although they are rare, with a setting which shall be representative because it is common.

AN IMMORTAL SOUL

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THE deep-sunken earthy lane, just wide enough for the passage of a cart, climbed upwards in zigzags between the pastures and ploughlands of the hill. With the wisps of hay and straw caught in the brambles which hung over it, and the primroses which in wavering lines illuminated the slopes below them, it might have been a little artery wandering into the very heart of Arcadian England. As a matter of fact, it stopped short at a rough gate, which committed the pedestrian to a footpath, and a rising field. The field was studded with gorse-bushes, of which those on the higher levels showed their prickles and their blossoms against the sky.

The afternoon sun of a mild March was shining, almost as warm and brilliant as the suns of the South of France, when a well-dressed man, with a brown Tyrolean hat, and a pearl in each of the shirt-cuffs which emerged from the Scotch homespun of his sleeves, made his way up the lane, as though he were an exploring stranger. During the course of his leisurely ascent, however, though the quarter of the sky facing him was still clear and cloudless, he noticed that a curious dimness was creeping over the objects round him, and he presently looked back to discover the cause of so abrupt a change.

The scene which met his eyes was singular. The hillside commanded a blue expanse of sea, which a crescent of coast, extending for some forty miles, and curving along the distant horizon into a vanishing horn of mist, embraced as an enormous bay. A succession of red headlands was still brightly illuminated, but the surface

of the waves was disappearing under volumes of thick, low-lying vapour, which, having charged the foot of the hill already, was advancing up the lane like the smoke of burning weeds. The invasion was so impetuous that the stranger, when he had reached the gate, was no longer in sunshine, but in a grey diaphanous twilight, as if he had climbed up the magic beanstalk into some visionary and incalculable world. He was soon tempted to think that he had done this in reality.

The gate having been surmounted, he paused and again looked round him. He was a man who had passed the prime, but not the vigour of life. His moustache, indeed, showed a few threads of silver; but the lines round his clear grey eyes spoke less of age than experience; and there was an unimpaired vitality in the smile, not displeasingly cynical, which lurked in the corners of his mouth as he watched the proceedings of the weather. He had hardly resumed his way when there was a new development of the unexpected. This was a vague sound, startling in the general silence. When first his ears grew aware of it, he ascribed it to a flock of birds twittering—so he supposed—in the hedge which the footpath skirted. But on turning to look for them, he soon found out his error. It happened that the hedge close to him was broken into an oval gap; and through this, as through the frame of a picture, he saw before him a spectacle of a whimsically surprising kind. He saw, softened by the mist, and moving in coloured groups, a number of girls—perhaps twenty—engaged in the game of hockey. Half of them wore coquettish little caps of scarlet; the other half, similar caps of gleaming turquoise blue. They were otherwise dressed variously, and in skirts of different lengths, their ages varying, apparently, from twelve up to seventeen.

Their movements had the grace of performers in an operatic ballet; and presently the stranger, who was standing amused and motionless, began to distinguish the inflections of their voices, and now and then a word. The young ladies spoke—he soon realized this—no less daintily than they moved. If they formed a school, as no doubt they did, it was plainly a school of the class which advertisements call "select." Gradually, from the many figures, he began to pick out several, whose exploits he found himself following with a sort of personal interest. One in particular became before long his heroine. Her carriage and the contour of her slim and flexible form struck him as more mature than the carriage and contours of the rest. She swung round, whenever the occasion required, with a charming mixture of abandonment and absolute self-possession, which suggested that she would be a perfect dancer. Though the game seemed to excite her, she nevertheless played it with a certain air of condescension, and whilst the hands of many

of the players were bare, and shone like pink roses, this girl was gloved fastidiously, and seemed finished from head to foot.

The stranger had begun to speculate, beguiled by an idle curiosity, as to what she could be doing there with associates in many ways so different from herself; but his thoughts had not strayed far when the performance showed signs of ending, and, not without some regret, he abruptly resumed his walk. He had not, however, proceeded for more than a hundred yards, when the footpath brought him to the open gate of the hockey-field, and the same idle curiosity brought him to a halt once more. On the bars of the gate hung a number of the young ladies' coats, emitting a shimmer from their variously coloured silk linings; and the young ladies themselves were by this time coming towards them.

The small girls came up first, under the charge of a maternal mistress, whose pleasant face was prim with all the correctnesses; and a scuffle ensued with refractory sleeves and collars, which was followed by much rearrangement of tangled and floating hair. The elder girls came more slowly, the stranger's heroine among the last. Her face, her figure, her bearing, now he saw them at closer quarters, struck him as even more mature than he had at first been tempted to imagine; but he presently realized that the impression thus produced on him was due, partly at all events, to some change in the girl herself. Her movements had lost, not indeed their grace, but their elasticity. The mere act of walking seemed to have become an effort to her. She was, moreover, noticeably pale; and, had it not been for a certain singularity in her expression, he would have supposed that she had overtired herself, and was possibly on the verge of fainting. But watching her more narrowly, as two assiduous companions were investing her in some long and very elegant garment, he was confirmed in the conviction, which at first was hardly credible to him, that what was affecting her was, not fatigue, but terror. What there could be to terrify her it passed his wit to conjecture, but the undoubted fact remained. With her lips slightly parted, and her eyes wide open and fixed, she was the image of one who is waiting for the approach of some dreaded danger. The incident was so curious and inexplicable that he had quite forgotten to question his right to a prolonged observation of it, when the girl's eyes, to his embarrassment, suddenly met his own. In hers, however, he detected, with a surprise that was like a shock, not embarrassment, but relief, and he could almost have fancied recognition. A second glance on his part convinced him that she was a total stranger, and fearing that he might be misleading her into taking him for somebody else, he was turning sharply away, when a strange event arrested him. From somewhere beyond the mist came a rumble of distant thunder. The effect on the girl was

instantaneous. She gripped the arm of the companion who was standing next her, and exclaimed with a gasp, "It is coming this way. I feel it!" Her cheeks were by this time bloodless, and her body was trembling visibly.

The other girl did what she could to calm her, but obviously frightened by the unmanageable fright of her friend, she called out with a nervous laugh to the mistress—

"Oh, Miss Hazel, please come here—come quick! Nest thinks that the thunder is going to gobble her up."

The mistress at once responded. The situation seemed to alarm her, but she did not seem unprepared for it; and she hastened towards the sufferer with an air of drastic maternity, provoking, as the stranger did not fail to notice, a cautious giggling amongst the younger members of her flock, who observed to one another that "the Nut was exactly like a clucking old hen."

"My dear Miss Vivian," she ejaculated, "what is all this about, pray? Don't tell me you're worrying about a silly little bit of thunder. If you want to worry about anything, you ought to be worrying about the rain, which indeed is commencing now. Run back with us, if you don't want to be drenched, and we'll send you to your home afterwards, dry and comfortable in a cab. My dear, don't think about the thunder. It's miles away—miles, miles."

"It's not," said the girl, vehemently. "It's close, and it's coming closer. Look—there's a man over there. A man will know; I'll ask him."

The words were still on her lips when another clap was audible; and the stranger had hardly time to realize what was happening, when he found that this young lady, who a moment ago had been a vision for him, was grasping one of his hands as a drowning man grasps a rope, was asking him with her lips if the storm were near or far, and beseeching him with her eyes to protect her against its vague malignity. "You wouldn't," she added, "think me an idiot if you knew how my heart was beating."

Many men, if appealed to in this astonishing way by a highly ornamental schoolgirl, in the sight of all her school-fellows, might have made the situation ridiculous at once for himself and her. The stranger, however, showed himself perfectly equal to the occasion. He did not even betray surprise. His expression, as he looked at her, was indicative of grave amusement, touched, but touched so subtly that she alone could be conscious of it, with the sympathy of a man familiar with the ways of women.

"I can only hope," he said, "that your heart will never beat for anything which is likely to trouble you more than to-day's thunder. I know," he continued, "about thunderstorms better perhaps than most people, and I'll answer for the conduct of this one."

His manner, as he added this last observation, had abruptly altered, the reason being his perception of the near presence of Miss Hazel, who, rigid with scandalized anxiety, was preparing to interrupt the interview.

Miss Hazel, it was evident from every line about her compressed lips, was one of that sisterhood whose conception of all indecorum is apt to be embodied in the person of the unintroduced male, and who always carry about with them a sheathed stiletto of rudeness, ready to repel the insult of attentions that never come. Unspoken disapproval, which would have expressed itself in rudeness presently, was gathering its forces in her naturally benignant eyes, when all her aggressive preparations were frustrated by the stranger's action. Disengaging his hand from the girl's with a sort of confidential brusquerie, he turned to the guardian goddess, who found herself, instead of attacking him, obeying a gesture on his part, which invited her to a private conference. There was a courteous self-possession in his manner which made rudeness impossible, but it opened the door for her to an explanation which suited her purpose equally.

"I am," she said, with a refrigerating dignity, "quite unaware whom I have the privilege of addressing; but, whoever you may be, I must apologize to you for the strangeness of that young lady. This is Miss Aldritch's school. All the girls belong to the very first families in the land. Two of those little ones are, indeed, daughters of noblemen. So I must tell you that Miss Vivian, who only comes to us for her German, and is residing here with her aunt—a lady of title—deserves to be excused on account of her peculiar health. The slightest nervous shock—and a thunderstorm appears to upset her more than anything else—may, so her doctors say, produce some serious crisis. If, therefore," Miss Hazel continued, "since Miss Vivian seems to think that gentlemen must understand thunderstorms, you could inform her in my hearing that there really is not the least danger, we can get her back to the school without any grave mischief, and then we can send her to her home, which unfortunately is in another direction."

"Yes, yes," said the stranger, unbuttoning his coat, and beginning to feel for something secreted in an internal pocket. "I've a sister who suffers from thunder in very much the same way. Perhaps, if you'll look at my card, it will justify you in letting me help you to better purpose than I could do by merely giving an opinion about the weather. In this part of the world my name is sufficiently familiar, though I have myself been absent for something like twenty years."

Miss Hazel inspected the card with the screwed-up eyes of an inquisitor; but no sooner had she deciphered it than her face

underwent a change, which would, had she only been a housekeeper, have been the prelude to a respectful curtsey.

"Oh, indeed!" she exclaimed. "Sir Rawlin, forgive my stupidity. I ought to have known you by your photographs. The papers here have been full of them."

"I may at all events thank them," he said, "for providing me with a proof of my identity. And now, madam, if you are good enough to think me trustworthy, what I would venture to propose is this—that I should see Miss Vivian—is that her name?—safe to her own door myself, and leave you free to attend to your other charges, who had better be off at once, for the drizzle has begun already."

Miss Hazel's face was by this time beaming with gratification and relief.

"Miss Vivian, my dear," she said, "do you hear what this gentleman proposes? This is Sir Rawlin Stantor. We all of us know his name, and we hope he will soon be member for our part of the county. He offers, with most obliging kindness, to accompany you straight home. Sir Rawlin Stantor—Miss Wynn Vivian. Miss Wynn Vivian—Sir Rawlin Stantor. Lady Susannah will be perfectly satisfied if I trust you to his discretion."

The girl signified her acquiescence in words that were hardly distinguishable, but her face, though it still was pale, lit up as her eyes caught those of her promised escort.

"Well then," Miss Hazel continued, addressing the rest of her flock, "it is high time that we were moving. So now, step out briskly, and be careful where you're going in the mist."

Miss Hazel's allusion to the mist was very far from being uncalled for. A puff of wind had so thickened it about the path which she and her little company now proceeded to take, that they were very soon invisible from the spot where they had been lately standing, whilst the two who were left behind could now hardly distinguish any objects but one another.

CHAPTER II

THE young girl and this strange protector of hers, whom she had never seen before, found themselves absolutely alone together in what seemed to be a boundless solitude. For the moment they could do nothing but remain patiently where they were, whilst the isolating vapour floated and smoked around them.

"Thank Heaven, they're gone," she said, with a deep sigh of relief. "How good of you to take compassion on me. I shall soon be better now. All the same, I am not feeling very firm on my feet yet. Will you let me stay quiet for a moment, and will you help me to steady myself? It's my nerves are upset, not me. I'm not a fool in reality."

Her figure, as she spoke, wavered a little, and, waiting for no permission, she quietly took possession of his arm, as though the fog were a ballroom, and she, tired with dancing, were giving herself to the care of a favourite and familiar partner. A passer-by who had come upon them might have taken them for a pair of lovers.

Here was a situation which Miss Hazel had not foreseen. The man's demeanour, however, could she have witnessed it, would have done much to relieve her. Allowing the girl to rest her weight on him as frankly as inclination prompted her, he first talked a little about thunderstorms and human nerves—a subject which he treated lightly—and then went on to ask her a few natural questions as to where her home was situated, and the relations with whom she lived. The conversation which thus resulted had evidently the effect of calming her. Her present home, she told him, was something like a mile away. She was living there as a supposed invalid, though she resented the term herself, with an aunt and three cousins. The aunt, it appeared, was a Lady Susannah Lipscombe. The family name of the cousins—two boys and a sister—was Arundel. Her lips, as she spoke of these matters, betrayed a certain sense of amusement.

"One of the boys," she went on, "is Oswald. The other is Mr. Hugo. The sister is Nina. She's ever so many years older.

Oswald writes poetry, and is going by-and-by to be a diplomat. Nina keeps hens. But you'll see what they're like yourself; for, of course, when we get back, you will have to come in to tea."

The man, meanwhile, in spite of his seeming detachment, had been watching her curiously, with a critical and increasing interest. The piquancy of her face, with its astonishingly delicate skin, produced an impression on him of something more formed and decided than is usually met with in the faces of young girls; whilst the well-controlled modulations of her voice, her unhesitating choice of words, and the accent of mundane experience which betrayed itself in her mention of her relations, all made him feel that a woman rather than a girl was leaning on him—a feeling which was subtly accentuated by the various details of her dress. Her outer garment, which was white, with red collar and cuffs, could, as was obvious to even his obtuse male mind, have come only from a master among ladies' tailors. It was equally obvious that a pearl which nestled at her throat was more valuable than similar ornaments generally worn by girls; and a movement of the gloved and slenderly proportioned hand, which lay on his arm unflinchingly, let slip into sight a bracelet with a curious device in diamonds—a miniature dove half hidden in something that might have passed for a saucer, if it had not been that under it twinkled the word "Nest."

She was silent for a time, when she had given her account of her family, and her fingers began to trifle with the folds of her companion's sleeve, as though she were considering the pattern of it.

"I ought," she said, "to apologize for taking up your time like this. Are you sure you don't mind my dragging you, I don't know how far, out of your way?" She looked up at him with appeal between her long eyelashes.

"Yes," he replied, laughing, "I think I may say I'm sure. Is this nature or art?" he could not avoid asking himself. "If it is art," he reflected, "she is a finished coquette already."

Her eyes were once more cast down, and her lashes made a dark shade on the returning colour of her cheek.

"You," she said slowly, in a tone of meditative content, "are a strong and very restful person. It's getting clearer at last. In a minute I shall be up to walking. To be supported by you has given me confidence."

Surprised at length out of his carefully guarded reserve by the tone of this culminating utterance, the man laid his hand on hers.

"My dear," he exclaimed, "thank you." Then he abruptly recovered himself, and drew a little away from her. "Tell me——" he began. He paused, and she saw that he was slightly smiling. "Tell me"—and he spoke with a sort of teasing slowness—"do I give you more confidence than the 'Nut'?"

She snatched her hand from his arm and broke into an amused laugh.

"How on earth," she said, "did you know that she was called that?"

He solved the mystery, and they both of them laughed once more.

"Look," she said, "how the mist is clearing. If you're ready to start, I am. We can see the path quite plainly. It runs between those bushes. But wait, please, for one moment. Look, there's a gleam of sunshine. My cousin, Mr. Hugo, who's a man of science, or a boy of science, or a baby of science, says that the world was all made out of vapour. You might think he was right now. Bush after bush, tree after tree, is being born again. Do let us wait and watch."

Her words, indeed, were not inapplicable to what was actually happening. Through the mist, which was now being dissipated almost as rapidly as it had been formed, the shapes of remoter objects were, one after one, reappearing. The gorse-bushes grew distinct again, and then, in the quarter towards which their path would take them, loomed a little way off the darkness of a wood of fir-trees. On all sides the opaque whiteness was turning to a transparent silver, through which it became gradually manifest that the gorse-field formed the highest portion of a great promontory or peninsula, several miles in length, and possibly two in breadth, the ground descending indistinctly in three directions towards the sea, and the sea itself in places growing faintly visible also. Then, through the straight trunks and the blotted foliage of the wood, certain chalk-white surfaces showed themselves, too definite in their outline to be remnants of the retreating mist. What these were was not at first apparent, but presently, as the air grew clearer, they turned into the walls of villas. Then, as the pair, beginning their walk, drew near them, the wood was seen to overhang a gulf of subjacent landscape, in whose depths houses innumerable rose out of mysterious gardens, and spires and crescents were glimmering on the steepness of lower hills; whilst the promontory on its landward side revealed, beyond fields and hedgerows, a line of buildings, which crossed it from sea to sea, and imprisoned a whole region of country within the cordon of a bewildering town.

Such, when viewed from the heights of this primitive rural oasis, was Southquay, of all the watering-places in Britain, and perhaps in Europe, the most remarkable for the charm of its situation, and at one time for its social brilliance.

Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian, having looked at the panorama long enough, abandoned their desultory pace, and began to step out in earnest.

"When I was a boy," he said, "all the world used to come here

—Russian princes, dethroned French emperors, great singers, beautiful American heiresses, and a third of fashionable London. Every day, at every corner, there were chances of unimaginable meetings. The whole place to me, in those days, seemed a world of romance and wonder. I had not seen it, till yesterday, for more than twenty years. The link that binds me to it now is, I fear, not romantic."

"Yes," she asked—"yes? And what sort of link is that?"

"I have," he said, "so you told me, been lucky enough to inspire you with confidence in me. I had better explain to you who it is you confide in. Miss Hazel recognized my name, and I think your aunt will find that it at least guarantees my respectability; but to you it can have meant nothing. Well, down on the Parade, where I dare say you often walk, you have perhaps noticed an exceedingly inartistic statue. It is meant to represent my father. My father owned, and I now own instead of him, most of the land on which this town is built. For that reason I have been invited to stand here as a Parliamentary candidate. If you introduce me to your friends, they will have no difficulty in identifying me."

She looked up at him quickly, and astonished him more than ever by taking one of his bare hands, which were firm and finely formed, in hers.

"You have certainly helped me," she said, "to explain you to my aunt Susannah; but I myself—may I tell you this?—felt confidence in you the moment I heard your voice, and especially when I saw your hands. I'm sure that hands must, in some ways, tell one much more than faces. There are certain people whom I like—more than like—whom I would be guided by, and who are ever so far above me; but if I shake hands with them, I shudder as if I had touched a toad."

Sir Rawlin was once more startled out of the reserve which he had been so judiciously cultivating.

"Your own hands," he said, "naturally make you fastidious. Is that your name which I see on your bracelet—Nest? It's a Welsh name, isn't it? It's a pretty name, an interesting name—Nest."

He articulated this last word in a way which left it doubtful whether he was merely considering its qualities, or was actually addressing his companion by it. At all events he gave no offence. Nevertheless, immediately afterwards, Miss Vivian, with a demure smile, lightly disengaged herself from all visible contact with him, and was walking by his side with a decorum of which even a Miss Hazel would have approved.

The reason of this movement on her part was of a very obvious kind. They had, during the course of their conversation, been slowly descending the hill under cover of a belt of trees, which stretched downwards from the wood like the thin tentacle of an

octopus; but their path, ending in some steps, had at this moment thrust them into a thoroughfare bordered with gas lamps, and enlivened with the desultory passage of pedestrians, cabs, and carriages. A little way off was a cab-stand, and a row of meek Bath-chairs; and close to these rose a large, elaborate church, from which a scanty congregation, mostly of the female sex, was being played into the open air by a faintly audible voluntary.

"That," said the girl, with a note of gravity in her voice, "as, of course, you know, is All Saints."

Sir Rawlin surveyed the building. "And so All Saints," he exclaimed, "has grown into that cathedral! In my time it was like a corn-exchange ornamented with stucco pinnacles. But I ought to know it, for there is the old vicarage—the same old, sleepy, opulent-looking villa, with the same shrubberies hiding it in dignified and assured seclusion. And there are the elms too. I'm glad they have spared the elms. And between the vicarage and the church there used to be a gravelled space, something like a cathedral close, with some school buildings at the end of it, and a circle of turf in the middle.

"Look in there," said the girl. "It's just as you describe it still, except that the schools were rebuilt, I think, a year ago. Mr. Barton did most of that; and the church is only just finished. If you admire the outside, you'd admire the inside more. You never heard such an organ, or such an exquisite choir. Come in and see. It won't take us a moment."

As she spoke, they were nearing the western door. When they reached it, she turned to enter, casting at him over her shoulder a glance which bade him follow her, and which seemed unused to refusals. He obeyed; and walking behind her, he was presently in the gloom within—a gloom which was faintly pungent with the odour of haunting incense. The performance of the organist was over. No solitary loiterer was visible in the hushed obscurity. Arch and pillar were mysterious, and the windows were like dusty jewel-work. Sir Rawlin was impressed by the building far more than he expected to be. In the distant chancel an altar, dark with embroidered purple, lifted its pale candles and its company of glimmering candlesticks. High above it the genius of Anglo-catholicism had hung a lighted lamp, which here could only suggest the absence of the consecrated host, just as in Roman sanctuaries such lamps denote its presence. The girl made a deep genuflexion, with the easy yet solemn grace of one to whom the act was habitual; and then, touching her companion, said to him, in a low whisper—

"Go up and see the reredos."

The touch on his arm became a gentle push, which, though he was hardly aware of it, thrilled him with a sense of intimacy. He

went forwards perfunctorily, noting on the walls, as he did so, what must certainly be the Stations of the Cross; and proceeded, having reached the chancel, to scrutinize its medley of embroideries, brass, and alabaster. These objects, though pretentious, were very far from tawdry. They seemed to communicate to the air a suggestion of austere plaintiveness, as though a viewless Magdalen were watching there, with the spikenard of her broken heart ready for the Divine lover. Sir Rawlin turned round to see how Miss Vivian was demeaning herself, but found that she had not followed him; and presently, retracing his steps between the pale congregated chairs, he came on her kneeling by a pillar, not far from the door. The daintiness of her white-gloved hands, and of the half-seen cheek that rested on them, her red hockey-cap worn with a little capricious tilt, and the faultless folds with which her coat accentuated the grace of her attitude—all these mundane niceties, contrasted and yet perversely in harmony with her air of absorbed devotion, invested her, for the man who contemplated her, with a new ambiguous charm, as though she represented all the passion which drives women to confessionals, and the passion which they bring there to confess; and this latent contrast—premature in one so young—was reimpressed on him by the quick and unembarrassed movement with which she rose from her knees as soon as he was standing close to her, and by her eyes, which seemed with their welcome to be taking renewed possession of him.

"I'm so glad you saw it," she said. "We'll go out by the other door. It takes us into the place which you called the cathedral close. Our shortest way is by a little path near the school-house."

As they came forth into the daylight, a cawing of rooks saluted them. Miss Vivian led the way towards an aggregation of parti-coloured brick buildings, whose pointed arches looked raw under the boughs of the old elm-trees; and Sir Rawlin, engaged in observing them, did not at first perceive that the opening of a narrow path, towards which his guide was conducting him, was beset by some mature ladies, grouped, like magnetized particles, round the person of a tall cleric. This individual was addressing them with an air of reserved affability, when, happening to turn his head and catch sight of Miss Vivian, he began bidding his auditors an almost abrupt adieu, and with evident purpose in his eyes hastened towards the new-comer. Even had she wished to do so, she could not have avoided stopping. Sir Rawlin at once moved on a few paces, and then turned round and watched him, not much pleased by the interruption. The cleric, whose age appeared to be about five and thirty, was, as his critic recognized, a man of striking appearance. His general expression was intellectual, but his eyes were those of a mystic, whilst his mouth suggested command, and a possible acerbity

of temper. Acerbity, however, was, at all events for the present, in complete abeyance. Standing close to the girl, he spoke to her in confidential and possessive undertones, to which her own manner in replying showed that she thought them natural. Sir Rawlin was conscious of something like impatient disapproval, which was slightly, though but slightly, mitigated when he saw that it was the young lady herself who at length put an end to the conference, with a hasty extension of her hand, and a still more hasty withdrawal of it.

"Please," said the cleric, calling after her, "tell Lady Susannah that I may be able to put in an appearance for a minute or two, after all."

"Who," asked Sir Rawlin, when Miss Vivian was at his side once more, "was the reverend gentleman, your friend?"

With a quick movement the girl beat her palms together. She seemed to be brushing away some speck of dirt from her gloves.

"He's a wonderful man," she said gravely. "Every one admires and looks up to him, but he's one of those people whom I don't much care about shaking hands with. That is Mr. Barton. He is, as a fact, only the principal curate here, but the vicar is an invalid, and Mr. Barton manages everything. If he had not stuck so bravely to his own principles, a very rich relation of his intended, they say, to leave him everything. But he's money of his own anyhow; and he has helped about finishing the church. He gave the reredos, and he lives on dry toast himself. When he preaches the church is crowded, and he has written books about Church music and liturgies. My aunt asked him to give me a few hints about singing. His own voice is beautiful; it hardly sounds like a man's. And those boys—those cousins of mine—who were brought up by an infidel tutor, try to be witty by laughing at him, when they only show how silly they are. But don't let us talk of Mr. Barton; he's quite outside ordinary life. Shall I tell you something more about ourselves? For very soon you'll be in the heart of our family circle."

"Do," said Sir Rawlin, quite willing to change the subject. "I'm particularly curious to hear about the mysterious Mr. Hugo."

In Miss Vivian's answering laugh there was the same note of amusement which his ears had detected in it when he made his allusion to "the Nut."

"Mr. Hugo," she said, "is the youngest; but we call him Mr. Hugo because the servants do. He reads Darwin, and nasty little chemical handbooks, and seriously pretends to believe that we once were monkeys. Oswald is happy in thinking that he has eyes like Byron's, and that his heart is being always broken. But at the same time he's amusing, and he means to die an ambassador. Aren't boys odd? Then you will see Nina, who's a dear, when once you get over the fact that she never can keep her hair straight, and won't let

my maid touch it for all the world. She manages all the housekeeping, and she's really very religious, though she reads Darwin also, and sometimes helps Mr. Hugo to make slides for his microscope by squirting blue ink into bits of raw liver and kidney. My beloved aunt Susannah is a light among the old Southquay cats. She's goodness itself, and gives half her money to the clergy. Well, there's our household, and as for our house—which calls itself Cliff's End—see! It's at the bottom of this valley, all alone, behind those woods."

The little path near the church had led them straight into sloping meadows secreted amongst high hedgerows. Primroses clustered by the gates. Cattle were being driven home; and an ancient, thatched farmhouse revealed itself, flanked by orchards. Having followed a thin brown track through this world of primitive quiet, Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian were now descending towards a road which wound between the opposing hillsides, and finally brought them to a lodge with pointed windows, having for its background a steep jungle of evergreens. They turned in at the gate, and found themselves on a long approach, which mounted the slope obliquely between hedges of clipped laurel, and ended in a wheel-marked space, with the porch of the house fronting them.

Two closed flies were just moving away. "Look!" exclaimed Miss Vivian. "When I asked you to come in, I'd quite forgotten that Aunt Susannah has some of the cats at tea to-day. Have you the courage to face them? But no—I'll tell you what. We'll go to the schoolroom first, by the side door from the garden; and I'll take you in to my aunt as soon as the ground is clear."

Passing through an aperture in a bank of shrubs and rock-work, they came out on a garden which seemed literally to overhang the sea, the house revealing itself as an old-fashioned stuccoed villa, with gables and clustering chimneys, and a large protruding wing, the whole being sheltered at the back by a grove of enormous ilex-trees. It was to a door in this wing that Miss Vivian led her friend, keeping as far as possible out of sight of the main windows.

CHAPTER III

The pair, on entering, found themselves in a small dim lobby, into which, through the thin crevice left by a door ajar, a sound of voices penetrated from some room within. The girl took her friend's arm in a manner which invited him to listen. The voices were two in number, and the words uttered by each were calculated to arrest attention.

"Peter," said the first voice, "oh, my love, thou art fair! Thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks. Sit there on your altar, and accept of our evening sacrifice."

"James," said the second voice, "darling James, come here! Why does my Jemmie go about pretending to be a dog, when he knows quite well that he really is a beautiful brown lizard?"

"Wait!" Miss Vivian whispered. "I'll go in and announce you."

He heard her entrance greeted by exclamations of "Nest," which were followed first by a murmur, and then by a short silence. Then the door reopened, and Miss Vivian's voice said, "Come!"

The next moment he was in a room, large, low, encumbered with untidy tables, and surrounded with cupboards and bookcases, which had just begun to flicker in the firelight. From a chair by one of the tables, which was laden with a substantial tea, a lady with a smiling and rather eager face, had risen, and was freeing herself from the embraces of a brown oblong dachshund. Two boys, or youths, were in the act of rising also; whilst enthroned and purring loudly on a large box against the wall, a magnificent Angora cat, with a dish of scraps before it, was wiping a whiskered cheek with a large, buttery paw.

Miss Vivian introduced her friend without any attempt at ceremony. "Here is Nina," she said, "here is Oswald; and that, over there, is Mr. Hugo."

The three exhibited a sense of having somehow been taken at unawares. Mr. Hugo in particular assumed a gloomy sedateness. He looked older than his years, and he had dark solemn eyes; but his face, when he smiled, became almost like a baby's. His brother,

who had an air of the world about him, and who was, moreover, very well dressed, justified Miss Vivian's description of him by an expression which was intended to be melancholy, but which struggled at the corners of his mouth with the forces of lurking mischief. For him the recovery of his self-possession was the work of a moment only; and there was something in Sir Rawlin's manner which so immediately accommodated itself to the situation, that the others were soon in the way of being equally at their ease also. This happy result was completed, whilst Miss Arundel was providing him with some tea, by an observation on his part, the effects of which were perfectly magical.

"Your cat," he said, "sits there as if he were an Egyptian deity."

"He *is* a deity," said Oswald, reading sympathy in the guest's face. "We prefer him to the bull of Mithra—at least for purposes of home worship. That box is his altar. Those little scraps of tea-cake are the remains of his burnt offerings. We've been reciting his evening Office, which is taken from the Song of Solomon."

Miss Nina went over to the altar, and began stroking the cat's fur. "He must," she said, "have been sacrificing a mouse to his own self in the garden, for he's left half his tea-cake, yet his beautiful sides are bulging. Oh, Mr. Hugo, how dreadful! Do come here and look. He's been gnawing the kidney which we injected with green ink for your microscope."

Ignoring the scuffle which ensued, Oswald glanced at Miss Vivian with a cautiously dawning smile.

"The real reason," he said gravely, "why he partly rejects our offerings, is that he has been catching mice in Mr. Barton's church, and has there learnt to demand from us a more advanced ritual. He wants us to intone, and he would like processions, and a banner or two. I have," he went on, "been making a sketch of the sort of thing he wants"; and he handed a sheet of paper to Sir Rawlin, which had been lying half concealed amongst the tea-things. On it was a robed priest, strutting with up-turned eyes, and bearing a banner whose device was a yawning cat. The cleverness of the drawing was extraordinary. Sir Rawlin at once recognized the features of Mr. Barton.

Miss Vivian approached, and looked over Sir Rawlin's shoulder. "Oswald," she exclaimed, making a snatch at the picture, "if you're silly and irreverent, I'll never be in love with you again! Sir Rawlin, don't encourage him."

At this moment an odd little pink-cheeked butler, with the intimate smile of long family service, appeared at the door, inquiring if they wished for lights.

"Berry," said Miss Vivian; "who's left in the drawing-room? Go, like a dear. Just peep in and tell me."

"For the time being, miss," he replied, "there's no one. A good few have come and gone; but her ladyship is expecting more."

"Then in that case," said Miss Vivian to her friend, "I'll avail myself of the lucid interval, and prepare Aunt Susannah for your advent."

She had hardly left the room when a new sensation was created by a sound between a cough and a hiss which came from under a sofa.

"Oh," cried Miss Arundel, "it's Peter. I'm sure he's going to be sick. I hope he will be, the darling. I must carry him from the room at once."

Mr. Hugo assured her that "the chromosomes were not toxic." The cat, however, was hastily caught, and deported in Miss Arundel's arms; and accordingly Sir Rawlin found himself alone with the two boys. Mr. Hugo by this time had retreated to a table in the window, and was contemplating in ostentatious seclusion a microscope and several saucers, on which were lying lumps of raw animal matter. His demeanour being obviously a mute plea for attention, Sir Rawlin approached the table; whereupon Mr. Hugo informed him that the microscope was of unusual power, and would reveal at that moment, if only the light permitted, a wonderful section of the heart of a diseased jackdaw. Then, casually pointing to a number of stoppered bottles—

"Those," he said, "contain sterilized gelatine. As soon as I can get a little radium I am going to produce life."

"And you," said Sir Rawlin to Oswald, "create life in another way. That sketch was uncommonly clever. I have just seen the gentleman depicted. Have you anything else you could show me?"

The boy, with hesitating pleasure, brought forth a large portfolio. Its contents were mostly caricatures, but amongst these were some water-colours, which caught Sir Rawlin's eye—fanciful sketches of scenes evidently meant to be oriental, and peopled with lovers whose birthplace was the pages of Moore or Byron.

"You've a fine imagination," said Sir Rawlin. "Have you ever been in the East?"

"No," said Oswald. "Have you?"

"Yes," said Sir Rawlin, smiling. "I have been there for many years."

The boy, who had been seated, pushed back his chair and rose. "I beg you to forgive me," he said, with a polished and yet ingenuous courtesy, "but just now my cousin's account of your kindness to her hardly left me time to realize who you were. I was reading only yesterday about your connection with the Persian Treaty, and your book of travels is upstairs by my bed now."

He blushed and checked himself, as though fearing he had said too much.

"My book," said Sir Rawlin, laying a kindly hand on his shoulder, "would, if it could only speak, try to tell you how it valued your compliment."

The return of Miss Vivian prevented his adding more. "Aunt Susannah, being Scotch," she began, "has nine hundred and ninety-nine cousins. She's persuaded that you are the thousandth, and is quite eager to tell you so. But wheels were crunching up the drive, as I slipped back through the hall, and it will shorten your sufferings if you wait here a little longer. Then I'll commit you to Berry, for I daren't venture again into the lion's den myself."

The girl's eyes were sparkling. The air of the room when she entered seemed to quicken with a new vitality, and Mr. Hugo stole back to the tea-table, nibbled a sponge-cake, and smiled at her.

"Oswald," she exclaimed, catching sight of the portfolio, "when you're not silly you're clever. Do some pictures for Sir Rawlin of the people he'll meet in the drawing-room."

Sir Rawlin seconded the request, and the artist hastened to comply, the others, in amused expectation, watching the movements of his pencil.

"Well," he said, "we'll begin with Miss Mittens, the authoress of 'Withered Bents.' Her head is always down like that, and her eyes are always up, and her hands are always crossed on her buckle, when they're not holding a tea-cup. And here is Miss Greendale, the authoress of 'Love in a Basque Village.' Her eyes roll with a gentle ogle, and she gesticulates with her hands sweetly, instead of folding them. I don't know for certain that either of them will be there to-day, but I can promise Sir Rawlin this one, if she hasn't come and gone already. This is Mrs. Morriston Campbell —only I'm not making her nearly fat and vulgar enough."

"Don't," said Mr. Hugo, "forget to put in her wart."

"She once," Oswald continued, "knew a Royal Princess at Bordighera, who graciously made use of her carriage every other day for a month, and she has never thought or talked about anything else afterwards. She sits swelling in a chair like that, as if she were a kind of Sinai, and every beast of a common person who approached her deserved to die. She's simply apoplectic with pomposity. Here's old Mrs. Summerfield. She's really a lady. Sir Rawlin will know her at once by her wig and her poke bonnet. These," and the artist here drew a number of blank ovals, "must be held to represent the widows of old Southquay incumbents. What shall I do now? Oh, yes. Nest, watch this." Under his pencil, as he spoke, a figure began to grow, drawn from the feet upwards, and revealing gradually a long clerical coat; but it ended at the collar, headless. "I am not worthy," he murmured, "to depict the all-sacred countenance."

"Oswald," exclaimed Miss Vivian, "you're an idiot." Before Sir Rawlin could realize what had become of her, she had reached a corner of the room, in which stood an object not previously noticed by him. It was a gramophone, which began forthwith to emit a well-known air from Carmen. "Oswald," she said, "listen," and she sang a few words with the instrument. "Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi."

Oswald refused to look. "Do," he said, "stop that horrible grating thing."

The girl did so. "Sir Rawlin," she said, "you had better come along with me. I won't, as I told you, go back into the drawing-room myself, but we'll get hold of Berry, and he shall be Lord Chamberlain."

The two disappeared accordingly. "My dear Nest," said Oswald, when she re-entered, "you're no doubt very much a young lady of the world, but you ought, when you go to pick up your German at Miss Aldritch's, to take lessons in the art of introducing people. I never gathered from what you said—perhaps you didn't know yourself—that your gallant knight-errant who delivered you from the jaws of the thunder, is our greatest Asiatic diplomatist. That's what they call him in the *Times*."

Sir Rawlin, meanwhile, had been ushered into a long, faded, drawing-room, where his hostess, who met him at the door, had been evidently looking out for his arrival. She had trustful eyes alight in a bony face of fifty, and her speech, slightly plaintive in its intonations, suggested the habitual attitude of a Christian and well-born lady towards a world where all husbands die, and not all die as wealthy as they deserve to do.

"Sir Rawlin," she said, "this is really pleasant. I knew most of your mother's family. I shouldn't wonder if we were related. Thank you, a thousand times, for your kindness to my poor little pretty niece. If you could stay till these people are gone, I should like to ask, and also to tell you, one or two things about her. I know you've had schoolroom tea, but will you look on at ours?"

Still talking, they slowly approached a group, consisting of some dozen persons, at the further end of the room. Sir Rawlin could hardly help laughing, it so closely resembled that which Oswald's sketch had represented. Mrs. Summerfield and Mrs. Morriston Campbell he recognized at the first glance, and then the back of Mr. Barton inclining itself towards some bonneted listeners. His hostess looked about to discover an appropriate seat for him; and he was presently conscious that his own name was being murmured in connection with that of Mrs. Morriston Campbell. Mrs. Morriston Campbell, however, altogether failed to catch it, and having acknowledged his bow in consequence with a freezing royal stare,

was putting him in his place with a few languid syllables, when old Mrs. Summerfield saved her from further trouble.

"Did I hear some one say," she asked, "that this is Sir Rawlin Stantor? Sir Rawlin, I'm too blind to see you, but I knew your dear father well, and I'm afraid I must add your grandfather. Yes, and Lady Emily too. Lady Emily was my oldest friend. We went together to our first drawing-room. I do hope you're going to stand for us, and keep out those shocking Radicals—shocking—quite shocking—who want to ruin the country."

Mrs. Morriston Campbell listened, her mouth and eyes wide open, and with a sudden readjustment of her features, was getting herself into position to recapture the angel whom she had sent away unawares, when Lady Susannah rendered the attempt fruitless by saying to Sir Rawlin, "I don't want to interrupt you, but there's somebody here who has to go in a minute, and who has a particular reason for wanting to make your acquaintance."

The person referred to proved to be none other than Mr. Barton. Sir Rawlin, whose prepossessions were not very favourable to the priest, and who fancied that he had detected in him certain drawing-room affectations as a tea-drinker, was now impressed by him in a way which he had not at all anticipated. Mr. Barton's eyes were still the eyes of a mystic, and the smile which he bestowed on his hostess was a little oversweet and finikin, but his manner, when he addressed Sir Rawlin, was courteous, alert, and dignified, and the mystical eyes acquired an expression of dry judgment.

"I am glad," he said, "Sir Rawlin, to have this opportunity of meeting you. If, as I presume, it is your object, before committing yourself, to see what the state of affairs in this constituency really is, I could give you some useful information which you won't get from the party agents. The fact is that, at Southquay—as you, after your long absence, have had probably no means of realizing—the strictly Church vote is a very important factor; and I think I should be in a position to tell you very much better than the agents can what the numerical value of the Church vote is, and also the precise grounds on which it would be withheld or given. If I might call on you, or if you cared to call on me, I could show you in half an hour or so very much how the land lies."

"That," said Sir Rawlin, "is just what I want to get at. The party agent is coming to see me after breakfast to-morrow morning, and if I should find you at home between twelve and one, I would come on straight to you, with a view to completing my education."

Mr. Barton declared himself delighted with this arrangement. He explained where his house was situated, and having hastily surveyed the room, as if looking in vain for somebody, declared that, being a busy man, he was unable to remain longer.

Mr. Barton's departure was a signal for other leave-takings. Mrs. Morriston Campbell, indeed, showed a tendency to outstay the rest, in the hopes of inducing Sir Rawlin to do her the honour of dining with her; but finding him not responsive, fired a parting shot at him by saying to Lady Susannah, in making her last adieux—

"The dear Princess, from whom I had a long, and such a sweet letter this morning, particularly asked to be remembered to you. Is not she wonderful? She never forgets friends."

"And now," said Lady Susannah, when she and Sir Rawlin were left alone together, "sit down there and be comfortable. I want you to tell me what it was that really happened. The thunder seemed to me nothing. What did my niece do? Did she look as if she were going to faint, or did she seem hysterical? Or what?"

"No, no," said Sir Rawlin. "There was thunder in the air no doubt while she was still playing hockey, but she never felt it at all till the excitement of the game was over. When the actual thunder came, well—if I hadn't been there, and able to reassure her, she might have fainted. That's possible. For ten minutes or so her nerves were more or less unstrung. But she quickly recovered herself—much more quickly than my sister would have done, who, whenever it thunders, goes and hides in the coal-cellar. As a matter of fact she showed singular self-control, and I should judge from her behaviour that by this time she can hardly recall what was the matter with her."

"You relieve me," said Lady Susannah, "immensely. To tell you the truth, this young lady is the cause of very great anxiety. In most respects she seems perfectly well, but her nerves were upset somehow by a serious attack of influenza; and ever since then any over-excitement has been apt to produce a breakdown of one kind or another. On one occasion she was unconscious for an hour. A thunderstorm was the cause in that case; so you see why I'm so much relieved by what you tell me about this afternoon. I hope it shows that she really is getting stronger. But there's one thing which I've often thought myself—and the doctors say so too, and what you said about the hockey reminds me of it—that what she wants most of all is to have her mind steadily interested. This hockey is good in its way, and then she's been studying German. But still I'm afraid that here there is not very much to interest her. She's oddly old for her years, and she looks on the boys as children; and I can't help fancying at times that she feels very much alone. Nina and I—poor child!—are not exactly companions for her. Of course there is Mr. Barton, who has given her some advice about her singing; but naturally he is different. And there again there's a difficulty of just the opposite kind. There can, I think, be no objection to my telling you about it."

Sir Rawlin, with a quickened interest, begged Lady Susannah to proceed.

"Well," she said, "the case is this. My niece, though you mightn't think it, has strong religious feelings, but she was brought up abroad, under not very fortunate circumstances, and it appears that she has never been confirmed. There is to be a Confirmation here at Whitsuntide, and, at her own earnest wish, Mr. Barton has begun to prepare her for it. That, in itself, is just as one would pray it might be; but I can't help fearing that her over-emotional nature may get troubled about the matter in a way that her body cannot yet stand."

"What," asked Sir Rawlin, "suggests to you this particular danger?"

"Oh," said Lady Susannah, "little trifles, which one can't help observing sometimes. For instance, she's fond of sketching; and she sits sometimes under some fir-trees just outside the garden, making studies of the rocks and waves. Well, I've found her there once or twice, and she seemed to be in a kind of dream. I've one of the sketches here. I keep it locked up in a drawer. You'll see why, when I show it to you. There's nothing in the sketch itself, but just look at the back."

On the back of the drawing, which Lady Susannah committed to him, were a few faintly pencilled lines of what seemed to be an attempted poem. With some difficulty he deciphered the following words—

"Olives gleaming
And the lamp of Mary beaming
Where the lone shrine fronts the sea.
Hesper, star of waves and twilights,
What is this that I remember,
Lost 'twixt Mary's lamp and thee?"

"Doesn't that," said Lady Susannah, as Sir Rawlin returned the paper, "strike you as rather morbid? If she were quite well otherwise, one wouldn't think anything about it."

"She must," said Sir Rawlin, after a pause, and without disputing this criticism, "be a very interesting girl. But surely in a place like Southquay, where, though it's not what it once was, all sorts of people are constantly coming and going, it would be possible for her sometimes to see a little society that would interest her, and keep her from indulging in feelings—well 'morbid' is, perhaps, the right name for them."

"I believe," said Lady Susannah, "that you're a very sensible person. But I myself go nowhere now. I know none of these charming people, and my own acquaintances, as you may have seen, are hardly very interesting to a girl. Still I might try. I might get

up a little luncheon party. My cousin, George Carlton, who knows everybody, is coming to me in a few days. Anyhow, Sir Rawlin, you must let me tell you this. I can see that this meeting with yourself has been a real stimulus and pleasure to her. You, at all events, if you're not too busy, will, I hope, come and see us again."

Sir Rawlin replied that, in a day or two, he would do so with the utmost pleasure, and he and Lady Susannah parted on the best of terms. His immediate experiences of Cliff's End, however, were not quite completed yet. He realized, when he was in the hall, that he had left his hat and stick in the schoolroom; but just as the butler was preparing to go and fetch them, a rustle of skirts was heard to proceed from somewhere, and Miss Vivian appeared with the missing articles in her hand.

"All right, Berry," she said, "I'll let Sir Rawlin out. I was waiting to give you these. Look! do you see how dark it is? I will show you your way down the drive. You didn't want to go, did you, without saying good-bye to me? No," she exclaimed, taking his arm as they emerged into the mild obscurity, "you mustn't go that way, or you'll fall over a thousand flower-pots. It's lucky I was here to warn you. And now we're alone, tell me—how did you get on with Aunt Susannah?" His answer appeared to satisfy her. "And Nina, and Oswald, and Mr. Hugo," she continued, "what did you think of them? They're dears, now the boys are no longer in love with me. For the first three weeks I was here, if ever I whispered with Oswald, Mr. Hugo looked as if he would have liked to throw his microscope at him; so I soon had to stop all that. I must show you one day the poem Mr. Hugo wrote to me, in which he compared my eyes to lenses. But tell me this. When I took you into the schoolroom, did you think that I'd brought you into a regular home for lunatics?"

"My dear," said Sir Rawlin, "I thought them all delightful. I should like if I could, to help on Oswald in his profession. But here we are at the gates. Thank you for your escort, and good-bye."

She took hold of the lapels of his coat. He could feel, though he could hardly see, her eyes through the darkness looking at him. He knew that, like her eyes, her lips also were lifted. He took her by both her hands, but otherwise he kept his distance.

"Must you go?" she said. "Well, I suppose you must. I hope you'll come and see me again. Will you do that, or won't you?"

His voice, he found to his surprise, was less under his control than his body was.

"Nest," he said, "yes, of course I will. I've settled it all with your aunt. I hope to see you again very soon indeed. You talk of hope. Your life is all before you. You have made me

forget that mine is a Pandora's box, which has not even hope left in it."

"Don't you hope," she retorted—and he divined that she was half smiling—"don't you hope to become a member of Parliament?"

"I have one thing left in the box," he said; "but it is not hope. It's work—to work while it is called to-day—to take the next step, or to refrain from taking it. I am refraining from something now."

He walked away hardly conscious of the manner in which he had just addressed her, but touched with the sort of embarrassment which a man is apt to experience who, having patted a lost dog, is followed by it to his own door.

CHAPTER IV

Though Sir Rawlin Stantor was the owner of most of the soil of Southquay, his father and his grandfather had so burdened the estate by their extravagance, that the actual income enjoyed by him had been little more than sufficient for his ease as a bachelor, in his original profession of diplomacy. His affairs, indeed, by this time showed some signs of improvement. Otherwise he could not have contemplated the expense of a parliamentary contest. But the old home of his family in the neighbourhood of Southquay was let; and his present quarters were in a well-known private hotel, occupying the centre of an imposing and secluded crescent, which looked across its private gardens on a miniature bay below.

His sitting-room with its high walls, whose expanses of watered paper were ornamented with huge engravings of the coronation of Queen Victoria, derived next morning, when he entered it, an aspect of habitation and brightness, from the warm spring sunshine, from several bowls of flowers, and a bachelor breakfast which was glimmering near the fire. He himself, however, presented to this agreeable scene a face overclouded with indications of some pensive annoyance.

Early in life he had been involved, by a worthless woman, in an entanglement which had injured, for the time, both his reputation and prospects. His own conduct and character had been subsequently more than vindicated; and he had every excuse for supposing, with the rash wisdom of twenty-five, that he knew women far too well to be ever again much moved by them. When he was beginning his career at Paris as a good-looking boyish *attaché*, the back-eyed wife of the minister of some South-American Republic, being anxious to extort a divorce from her legal lord and master, pitched on the English youth as an instrument suitable for involving her in the requisite and duly attested indiscretion. She contrived to make him compromise her at some hotel, though, so far as he was concerned, in a purely platonic fashion, by inducing him to listen in her bedroom to a tale of her wrongs and sorrows. A duel with the husband followed, which Sir Rawlin, though a precocious pistol-shot, sought so earnestly to avoid that his friends even were doubtful of his courage. Their

doubts were intensified when, as a final preparation for the encounter, he took from his pocket a brandy-flask, set it at the foot of a tree, and said, "When the shooting's over, whether I'm hit or no, go for that flask and bring it to me." The shots were duly fired. He was himself grazed in the shoulder, and his own ball was in the middle of the silver brandy-flask. "I despise a coward," he said. "That's why I'm fool enough to be here. My flask will show you that I despise duelling more." The real facts of the case were not known for a year. Meanwhile the boy had to give up his profession, and was taken as a private friend by a distinguished diplomat to Constantinople. At the Embassy there he was kept in touch with political life and acquired a remarkable knowledge of the languages and literature of the East. He subsequently travelled in India and the less-known parts of Persia, and at length in the latter country, with signal distinction, and under his old chief, he filled for many years the post of first secretary at Terehan. Good-looking, and possessing a temperament of the kind that attracts women, women distinguished and beautiful had made many attempts to cure him of the ill opinion of their sex resulting from his first experience of it. One of them had succeeded so far that he and she together enjoyed the rapture of the illusion that the world was well lost for love—an illusion shipwrecked by its consequences, and unfortunate both for him and her. Other incidents, similar to but less serious than this, had failed to provide him with more than those passing distractions which leave little behind them but disappointment, and end in exhausting the fountains of the expectation which is the life-blood of romance. Finally, in his attitude towards women, he had arrived at a half-humorous cynicism, humanized by a respect for them as creatures who were capable of receiving injuries, although in his own case they could no longer inflict them, and whom he felt himself, for his own part, incapable of ever again injuring.

But now all of a sudden this assured calm had been broken, and that by an incident of seemingly the most trivial kind. Had he not allowed himself—such was the tenor of his thoughts—to indulge in a sentimentality with regard to a mere child which the subtlest fascinations of womanhood had for years failed to awaken in him? And had he not allowed himself to encourage an outburst of sentiment on this child's part, to which serious response of his own was of course out of the question? The moral result of all these searchings of heart was a self-reproachful pity for one so young, who had with so pathetic a readiness put it in his power to injure her, and a resolve that, when he met her again, he would so readjust his conduct as to place himself clearly before her in the guise of a mere interested friend.

This resolution left him sufficiently satisfied to enable him, aided

by the prospect of two impending business interviews, to dismiss the subject altogether from his mind. These interviews were for him, indeed, of urgent practical importance. One was to be with the representative of a wealthy order of monks recently expelled from France, who desired to purchase a site from him for the erection of an enormous monastery. The other was to be with the secretary of the Conservative Association of Southquay, who was to give him a general account of the position of affairs in the constituency.

The former of these gentlemen, true to the appointed minute, arrived before Sir Rawlin had quite finished his toast—a solicitor with a grave aspect worthy of his clerical clients.

"What is wanted," he explained, "is twenty acres at the top of Watbury Hill—the locality which has already been indicated to you; and I am authorized to offer you a thousand pounds an acre. This, as my clients are aware, is something over the market value; but if your acceptance is prompt they are not disposed to haggle."

The offer, indeed, was one which considerably exceeded his expectations; and when his visitor, after an hour's discussion of details, left him alone with the matter practically settled, Sir Rawlin felt that he had solved the serious financial difficulties which would otherwise have made the wisdom of his contesting the constituency doubtful. He was therefore able to welcome his next visitor, the secretary of the Conservative Association, in a spirit of confidence which agreeably surprised himself.

The general upshot of the secretary's information was this, that the electors of the Southquay division, with the exception of some eight hundred, were permanently separable into two equal bodies, each of which, consisting of some five thousand persons, supported on principle the Conservative and the Liberal candidate respectively, the result being dependent on the action of the eight hundred remaining, who had, so the secretary observed, no principles at all, and would consequently be the only body with which a candidate need much concern himself. These arbiters of destiny, he proceeded, would be swayed by a variety of considerations, such, for example, as the amount which might be got out of the candidate personally, as a patron of local institutions, and a customer of local tradesmen. "You see, Sir Rawlin," he said, "a gentleman in your position can do a great deal in a place like this impossible for a carpet-bagger. You'll forgive me for throwing out a few hints; and I'll leave these lists and notes with you, that you may go over them at your leisure."

"By the way," said Sir Rawlin, when the agent rose to go, "there's one little thing more. You spoke just now of the dissenters. From what I happened to hear yesterday, it appears that the purely church party are also a power in the constituency. Mr. Barton, who told

me this, promised me some detailed information. Do you know this Mr. Barton, or what kind of man he is?"

The secretary who was bowing himself out, and had reached the doorway, paused.

"I don't know Mr. Barton," he said, "not, so to speak, personally. But he's a masterful man, whatever he is. He fills All Saints with his preaching, and besides that, he's a man of means. He gave two thousand pounds towards doing the church up. He gives to the poor too, though they say he fairly frightens some of them, he looks for all the world so exactly like a foreign priest. He has a quarrel on, by the way, with the President of the Scientific Institute, who has dug up some old bones in a cave which is close to All Saints, and asked leave to exhibit them temporarily in one of the parish rooms. The old vicar would have given his consent, if it hadn't been for Mr. Barton, who said that the exhibition of the bones was going to be made an excuse for getting a German atheist over from Berlin to lecture on them. A surprising number of people —not all women, by no means—have been sticking up for him. He must by this time know his own lot pretty thoroughly. Yes, Sir Rawlin, if he'll only tell you what he knows, I should say you couldn't do better than pick the Reverend Mr. Barton's brains."

Sir Rawlin, when the secretary was gone, glanced at the lists which had been left with him; but, despite all his late self-criticism, between these documents and his eyes a flower-like image of youth obtruded its distracting spell. He moved across the room to a sideboard, and took from it three volumes, which he had asked for the previous evening—volumes belonging to the hotel. They were a Peerage, a Landed Gentry, and a British Biographical Annual. Beginning with the two former, he set himself to find three names. These names were Lipscombe, Vivian, and Arundel. The Arundels of Cliff's End he had no difficulty in identifying as belonging to an old family well-known in the county, and he was amused to find that, amongst their many relations, most of them respectably provincial, they counted that brilliant luminary of the fashionable world, Lady Conway. Their father had been a dean; their mother had been a Miss Lipscombe, whose brother had married Susannah, daughter of the Earl of Peebles—this lady being somehow connected with the brilliant Lady Conway also. Thus far all was simple; but when he came to the Vivians, though a male Vivian was recorded as the husband of a female Arundel, no Vivian young lady was discoverable among the mass of bewildering entries, who either bore the somewhat unfamiliar name of Nest, or could even by courtesy be numbered amongst Lady Susannah's kindred. There was, however, a Captain Rhys Wynn Vivian, born between fifty and sixty years ago, of whom it was merely stated that he had served in the Second Life Guards,

that at an unnamed date he had married an unnamed lady, and that by her he had had issue who were treated with a similar reticence. This man, thought Sir Rawlin—vaguely associating his name with some ancient scandal—might, perhaps, be Miss Vivian's father, perhaps he might not; but, as there was no deciding the question, he closed the Landed Gentry, and, taking up the Biographical Annual, proceeded to turn its pages with the desultory manner of one who is looking for something which he knows he will not discover. Presently he came upon a page which caused him to give a slight start, and to hold the book in a position which would enable him to see more clearly. What he read was at follows: "Barton, Theophilus, the Reverend. Second son of Oliver Boyne Barton, Esquire, of Belfast, and Augusta, daughter of the Revd. J. Fitzgerald, Canon of Canterbury. Educated at Rugby and Cambridge. For many years previous to taking orders, Mr. Barton was lecturer on religious art and architecture at the Universities of Belfast, Liverpool, and Manchester. Has travelled much in Spain, Italy, and the East. Author of 'Our Lady in Byzantine Art,' 'The Liturgy of the Church of Edessa,' 'The Farce of Scientific Scepticism,' 'A History of the Pointed Arch,' 'The Redeemer in Ancient Prophecy,' 'The Immanence of Catholic Unity,' 'The Uncompanioned Pilgrimage; or Notes on Christian Mysticism.'" In addition to these items of information Sir Rawlin learned farther that Mr. Barton had taken priest's orders about eight years ago; that he had been chaplain to the Father Superior of one Anglican Confraternity, that he was still secretary to another—the Brotherhood of the Hidden Union; and that, after some years experience of parish work elsewhere he had undertaken his present duties at Southquay.

Sir Rawlin was still meditating over this account of a man, the first sight of whom had roused in him a curiosity not quite amicable, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a waiter, and the announcement of a third visitor, whom Sir Rawlin's gesture of surprise showed to be quite unexpected, and whose superior importance to his predecessors was made sufficiently evident by the pompous manner in which the door was thrown and held open to admit him. The new-comer was a personage of striking aspect. In his sedate movements, and in the expression of his powerful face there was something of that aloofness which old age, and old age only, brings to those who have played commanding parts in life. No one, indeed, could have supposed him to be less than seventy-five; but his carefully trimmed and curling hair was abundant and unstreaked with grey, and, despite their wrinkled lids, his eyes were so alive and luminous that, besides being unconjecturably old, he seemed also to be unconjecturably young. His form was very fittingly muffled in a magnificent sable overcoat; and a finely shaped hand, ornamented with a large

turquoise, held a gold-headed cane, on which now and then he leaned.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Sir Rawlin, going forward to meet him. "What talisman has brought you here, or what enchanted horse? I imagined you on your travels still—brooding, perhaps, over the lost glories of Sidon, or camping on the plains of Troy, and trying in the dead of night, like Apollonius of Tyana, to raise the ghost of Achilles."

"Free me from this burden," said the traveller, unbuttoning his heavy furs. "No, my dear Rawlin, I've tried to raise one ghost only. That is the ghost of health; and with the help of my friend, and most fascinating companion, Dr. Thistlewood, I have not only raised it, but compelled it to remain with me in the flesh. Did you ever meet him? He's the only man I know of who has deliberately taken to medicine as the true route to philosophy. I always tell him that, when he uses his stethoscope, he is listening for the heart-beats, not of his patients, but of the universe. If I had to choose my own career over again, I'd be a doctor—a doctor like Thistlewood, who can pick his patients, travel to find them, collect them, house them, compare them, and never need think of fees, except those that are forced on him. If you've not met him, you must meet him. You'll find that you never knew what a doctor was like before. But I didn't come this morning to talk about Dr. Thistlewood. I came because I heard at the hotel where I've been staying for a night or two, that you had just arrived yourself, and that there is a question of your standing for this constituency. Well, I was one of your trustees, so I'm privileged to speak plainly. Elections, my dear Rawlin, even in these days, cost something—I only wish they cost more; and what I want to tell you is that, if you felt it unwise to burden the estate with the expense of a contest, you would be giving me one of the best of pleasures yet possible for me, by allowing me to consider such expenses as my affair, not yours."

"I would," said Sir Rawlin, "have accepted your offer with gratitude, if I had not had a windfall this morning of twenty thousand pounds. Read that memorandum, and congratulate me. If the Protestants attack me, I can tell them that I have spoiled the Egyptians."

"I congratulate you," said the traveller, as he handed back the paper; "though the bounty of the Church has left me out in the cold. And now, what do you say? I've a carriage at the door, which will take me presently to the station, but there's half an hour to spare. Shall we drive, and enjoy the morning—a morning worthy of Naples? Or, better still, shall we walk up through the gardens, and send the carriage round to meet us on the road above?"

Sir Rawlin assented to this latter proposal with alacrity, as

the course of the walk suggested lay, he said, in the very direction in which a business appointment would, in any case, take him presently.

The road to which the traveller had alluded, known as the New Drive, was one of the most beautiful and most peculiar features of Southquay. High above the hotel, at the back of which were wooded cliffs, it followed the folds and protrusions of the steep hills for a mile or so. Above it were fir woods. From its edge down to the sea descended exotic evergreens interspersed with natural brushwood, amongst which scrambled a number of labyrinthine pathways; and slowly up one of these pathways the two companions climbed.

The traveller, who was for his years a surprisingly vigorous walker, was now free, since the purpose of his visit was accomplished, to return to the subject of Dr. Thistlewood, and also to explain the reason of his own presence in Southquay. Southquay, he said, with which he had been long familiar, had been recommended to him as possessing the best spring climate in England for one who, like himself, had just returned from warmer regions. He proposed accordingly to take a house there for a month or two, and have Dr. Thistlewood as his guest, if one which would suit both of them could be got ready in time—an arrangement, he added, which would possibly have the result of Dr. Thistlewood's continuing the tenancy of the house himself, and using it as one of the private homes or hospitals, of which he had several, for the treatment of selected patients.

"I suppose," continued the traveller, "you know his history, and the source of his great fortune. His mother was an American heiress. His nominal father was an Englishman—the last, I believe, of an old but decayed family—an officer in the Austrian army. His real father was undoubtedly the Archduke Francis. Well, so far as his own medical practice is concerned, one new feature which he has been able to introduce is this. Many doctors will treat poor patients for nothing. Dr. Thistlewood will always, if necessary, pay them liberally for being treated."

"Like every one else," said Sir Rawlin, "I, of course, knew him by name. I should like to meet him."

"You shall," said the traveller, "if you stay on here, as I hope you will. But here we are at our summit. Italy, my dear fellow, Italy! Those two rocks there might be the Isles of the Sirens."

The views from the New Drive, on the asphalt pavement of which they were by this time standing, were indeed of a kind unequalled in Northern Europe. The restless waters, through layers of headlong foliage, showed their blue surface growing milky as they murmured

on the beach below. Here and there on the blueness was a white or a ruddy sail, and the oval of a boat's deck. Two island rocks shone each in its fringe of foam.

The traveller leaned on the railing by which the edge of the footway was protected, and contemplated the scene in silence. Grey cliffs in the distance, with furze-dotted downs above them, landward slopes darkened with clinging copses, the near greens of the macrocarpas, Irish yews, and the tops of laurel, crowding the gardens from whose depths he has just climbed, the cloudless ultramarine of the sky, the bloom and glitter of the sea, fanned by the faintest and mildest of all spring breezes, the light-hearted sparkle of the foam where the brine was whispering to the rocks—to him and to Sir Rawlin likewise made it seem as though all the world were singing.

"Why, with this at their doors," he said, "should Englishmen go to Naples? All Europe came to look at this in days which you and I remember. Who comes here now? Let us walk on. The answer is here before us."

By a slight gesture of the hand he indicated the infrequent pedestrians, and occupants of shabby flies, to whom the New Drive was apparently at that moment abandoned. In some of the flies nondescript men lounged, who were exchanging jokes with the drivers. In others were shapeless bundles of female cloaks and wrappings, surmounted by appropriate faces, whose aspect was either blank or peevish. The male pedestrians, though sufficiently well-dressed, seemed to wear their leisure like clothes that did not fit them. Some of them spat, or nudged each other as they went along, or enlivened their conversation by throwing a stone aimlessly. The females were models of decorum, most of them embodiments of maidenly middle age, who produced on the passing observer no other impression than that of a vague briskness, or equally vague dejection.

"If the sirens," said the traveller, presently, "still inhabit their islands, they are evidently not in the habit of making trips to the shore. These people," he continued, "some of them, are no doubt invalids. Well, we don't grudge them the healing of rest and nature because they are not personally interesting either to you or me. Indeed even to us they are interesting in a certain sense. The sorrows of the unattractive are specimens of all sorrow, a drop from the universal reservoir, just as beauty and charm are, whether those of a woman or a flower. Still the most ferocious humanitarian will hardly blame us for regretting that we have not here a few examples of the flower-like women as well. Look," he said, taking Sir Rawlin's arm. "Beyond this dip in the ground, where the road disappears round the corner, you can see two female figures like black shadows against the sky. You can't mistake them. They are going to sit down on a

bench. Well, merely from the way in which they move, you can see that those women are something quite different from the others. As for the others—watch them, group after group. They almost paralyze one's power of believing that an attractive woman is possible."

The Drive had by this time turned away from the sea. Below it was a deep valley, rural with fields and hedge-rows, and the hill opposite ran out to a promontory on which, amongst thickets of ilex, was a cluster of white gables. Sir Rawlin had recognized them already; and there was something in his companion's tone—a subtle suggestion of far-off romance and gallantry—which brought back to him under a new aspect his own adventures of yesterday. His self-reproaches with regard to them began to renew their sting; but this was accompanied by a surprisingly bright reblossoming of the thought that romance and he had not yet quite parted company.

"I can," he said, "give you a better proof than your own that the sirens in this part of the world do come ashore occasionally. I found one in a sea-fog yesterday, on the top of a high hill. She has her home for the time in that house which is facing us. Her toilette must have been designed by Fragonard. She might be a shepherdess on a fan; and she ought to have a jewelled crook, and be leading a lamb by a rose-coloured silk ribbon. We might, if we had a pair of glasses here, be able to see her little red cap amongst the bushes."

They had both stopped in their walk, and were looking towards Cliff's End. The traveller's face was by this time all attention, and Sir Rawlin proceeded to describe the events of the previous day, disguising by the levity of his manner both the interest and the trouble which they had not ceased to excite in him.

"I envy you," said his companion, when the story had reached its close. "When I come back from London you must introduce me. Lady Susannah—yes—I must have seen her when she was a plain girl. My dear fellow," he went on, "there are two passions—and politics is not one of them—through which we approach the secret which alone makes life valuable—the passion for woman, and the deeper passion for knowledge. Only this last remains mine. Both may still be yours."

"You are wrong," said Sir Rawlin, conscious of redraping himself in the toga of his true character. "When men have loved and recovered from love a sufficient number of times, they find that any fresh experience of it, even if they should be tempted to wish for this, would be only folly for themselves, and only cruelty for others. But, to turn to a subject a little more interesting than myself, we are coming to your own two ladies, whose distinction was so evident to you from a distance. The near one at all events—for I can't see the other—is, I regret it for your sake, not very well turned out."

This last observation, which was made in a discreetly subdued

voice, was hardly out of his mouth, when the subject of it made a gesture in his direction which was not unlike a bow. In some surprise he glanced at her for a second time. The gesture was repeated, and he recognized Miss Nina Arundel. She rose to meet him, and as she did so the figure of her companion revealed itself. It was that of Miss Nest Vivian. Her hat was trimmed with sable. On her breast was a bunch of violets. Her face, rather pale, was like ivory that had been rubbed with rose-leaves.

Sir Rawlin was acutely conscious that, were he somewhat younger, he would be blushing. He glanced towards her with a certain sense of shyness, almost afraid of the feeling which she might possibly display on seeing him. She, however, unlike her cousin, betrayed absolutely no consciousness of his presence. She remained, indeed, to all appearance, absorbed in the contemplation of her muff, till Miss Arundel, slightly stooping towards her, said—"Nest, here's Sir Rawlin Stantor." Then she at once looked up, and her smile and the inclination of her head were so civil in their complete self-possession that a stranger might have thought them encouraging. But she did not extend her hand, and there was in her expression and movements no trace whatever of any recollected intimacy—it seemed indeed hardly any of any recollected acquaintance.

Sir Rawlin's feelings for a moment were beyond his own powers of analysis. That which was uppermost was a feeling of his own folly in having wasted his valuable scruples on an impudent little minx like this, who actually presumed to treat him as some smart young lady in London might treat a casual partner in whose arms she had waltzed at Cairo. His next feeling was that he was shaking himself free from all thoughts of her, as though they were unwelcome substances which had accidentally settled on his coat. Meanwhile he was conscious that Miss Arundel was addressing him with much friendliness.

"My cousin," she was saying, "has tired herself by coming too fast uphill. Sir Rawlin, my aunt is so pleased to have met you. She has written you a letter this morning, which Nest and I have been posting; and she hopes very much that she will soon see you again."

Sir Rawlin was not a man who was easily put out of countenance. He made Miss Arundel a cordial though curt response; he raised his hat with a conventional smile to Miss Vivian; and, declaring that his engagements would not allow him to delay, he hastened to rejoin his companion who had walked on slowly before him.

"Your eyes," he said, with a dry laugh, "are much better than mine. One of those two ladies of yours is my beautiful shepherdess herself. Of course she's a mere child."

The traveller, who had been watching the meeting, cast a parting glance behind him.

"I was sure of it," he said, striking the ground with his stick. "I commend your judgment, and envy you your good fortune. For years I've seen nothing like her. God bless me, you talk of her as a child. A girl like that is never a child. At fifteen she has in her the eternal charm of womanhood; and—my dear fellow, take care of the horses—unless her digestion fails her, she will never be an old woman. Well, here's the carriage. Are you coming with me? Or shall I leave you free to go back to the shepherdess?"

"I'm coming on with you," said Sir Rawlin. "Will you put me down near the church with the grey spire. I've no time this morning for any shepherdess of hearts. My business lies with a shepherd of souls and votes."

CHAPTER V

THE house, of which, as a lodger, Mr. Barton occupied the whole, was close to the church, and coeval with the new school buildings. With its pointed arches of raw red-and-white bricks, it wore the aspect of a miniature modern vicarage. It opened on the gravelled precinct which Sir Rawlin had crossed yesterday, and which now in the brilliant sunlight was chequered with the shadows of the tall, leafless elms. The actual vicarage, with its shrubberies, its ample, low-lying roofs, and its comfortable stucco, discoloured by the weather of sixty years, facing Mr. Barton's door, formed one side of the enclosure; and before its pillared porch, at the moment of Sir Rawlin's approach, was a little group, the central object of which was an old-fashioned Bath-chair. In this was an old man with a delicate and scholarly face, whilst a matronly lady, not much younger than himself, was administering something to him which appeared to be a glass of wine, and a footman with silver buttons was adjusting the leather apron. Sir Rawlin felt that here must be the same old vicar who had been celebrated as a translator of St. Chrysostom some thirty years ago. It was a peaceful scene, pervaded by that atmosphere of spiritual united with worldly dignity which the English Establishment has alone known how to generate. The rooks cawed overhead, and the bells of the grey tower chimed the hour of noon.

Having passed through the stillness, which these sounds alone broke, to the door of Mr. Barton's residence, Sir Rawlin pressed the button of a modern electric bell. In another moment an obliging maid was informing him that Mr. Barton was out, but would very shortly return, and had begged, with many apologies, that Sir Rawlin would step in and wait for him. The visitor was accordingly taken through a clean-smelling distempered passage, with a tiled floor and a dado of varnished pitch-pine, and shown into a room whose mellow and scholastic aspect was, in a house so new, at once pleasant and surprising. Up to two-thirds of their height the walls were lined with bookshelves, the remaining space being occupied with engravings of religious pictures, and a number of very large photographs representing ecclesiastical buildings. The floor was covered with a matting of dusky green, hard in texture, but very delicate in colour;

and the whole of the wide window was blocked by an enormous writing-table.

Gradually other details forced themselves on Sir Rawlin's notice. Hung by wires from the top moulding of the bookshelves, and hiding many of the books, were some antique coloured plaques representing, in high relief, heads of Italian saints in meditation or in acts of ecstasy. On the writing-table was a tall crucifix, some docketed bundles of what evidently were business letters, and a something which seemed at first to be a broken ormolu inkstand, but which proved, on nearer inspection, to be a small and curious censer. More interesting, however, than any other objects were the books, many of them ragged in aspect, most of them bearing signs of use. They were very various in character. There were Government Blue-books, text-books of logic and history, and travellers' guide-books, interspersed with Italian poets. There were learned treatises on Pompeii and the Roman Forum, on the schools of mediæval painters, and the development of Christian architecture. There was a copy of Plato's "Banquet," translated and bound in vellum, an "Imitation of Christ," "The Interior Castle of St. Theresa," "The Spiritual Combat," "The Dark Night of the Soul," and between a Keats and a Shelley was "The Little Flowers of St. Francis." There were four Lives of St. Ignatius, the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, and a treatise by an English Jesuit called "The Collapse of Darwinism." Besides these, in noticeably handsome bindings, were some large, illustrated volumes dealing with Christian ritual and symbolism; and on a small table were some others, illustrated also, costly in appearance, and evidently quite new, one of which, lying open, displayed an exquisite reproduction of a picture of a virginal and blue-robed saint from whose worn face time had fallen, and who was knowing the abyss of ecstasy as she was kissed by the Divine Bridegroom.

Such were the typical features of the priest's library which caught Sir Rawlin's eye, and gave him a strange impression, as though he were being surrounded by the thoughts, the struggles, and the secret emotions of the man. Above the chimney-piece was a drawing of a boy dressed like a chorister, on the margin of which were pencilled the words "In Memoriam," together with two lines borrowed from a well-known hymn—

> "Brother, thou art gone before me,
> And thy saintly soul is flown."

Under this portrait was a photograph of a monument to Mr. Barton's mother. On the margin of this also there was a pencilled word. It was "Dilectissima."

Sir Rawlin was still engaged in contemplating these objects when

steps were heard outside, and Mr. Barton, habited in a cassock, entered.

"Sir Rawlin," he exclaimed, "I trust you will forgive me for my lateness when I tell you that I've just been waiting to administer the last sacraments to an unfortunate, dying woman—waiting, alas! in vain. She had, with a view to allaying some poor momentary distress, been literally so drugged by one of these godless doctors that she died before my very eyes without recovering consciousness. However, what's done is done. I shall remember her at Mass next Sunday. Pray, Sir Rawlin, sit down, and let us proceed to business." Mr. Barton's manner, despite his somewhat high-pitched voice, had now become that of a shrewd man of affairs. "We have," he said, producing a paper on which some figures were scribbled—"we have amongst the voters in the Division seven hundred and forty communicants, whose votes would be determined primarily by the candidate's attitude towards the Church. Apart from Church matters, we should most of us be on your side—the Conservative. But—let us make no bones about it—with us the Church comes first, and all other considerations second. And now let me tell you what, politically, our claims for the Church are."

Sir Rawlin declaring that this was just what he wished to learn, Mr. Barton, slightly shrugging his shoulders, proceeded to observe that the Church—her distinguishing note being the possession of apostolic orders—was of necessity one or other of two things. She was a product of human delusion, or the custodian of supernatural truth. If she were the former, she should be suppressed. If she were the latter, she should be supreme. In especial, for politically this was the most urgent question, the Church must, as the intellectual mother of the nation, be placed at no disadvantage in endeavouring to maintain and extend her rightful influence over the young, protecting them, on the one hand, from the aberrations of dissent and heresy, and, on the other, from that shallow materialism, scarcely less deadly, which now was aiming, under the specious name of science, at loosening the primary bonds of all social morality, and owed such success as it had to this unacknowledged cause. "If," said Mr. Barton, in conclusion, "the Secular Arm will be her servant, so much the better for all. If not, let us do without it. Briefly, Sir Rawlin, the thing we ask for is freedom—freedom of belief, ritual, discipline, and educational action; and that's hardly a demand which, amongst Englishmen, ought to be so very unpopular."

"Well," said Sir Rawlin, who had proved himself a most excellent listener, "if freedom is what you want for your religion, I think I may honestly say that you'll find me quite at one with you. I need not go into details, but let me give you two examples of my meaning. Wherever a desire prevails to worship the sacred elements, I would

have the English clergy free to reserve and expose them. Wherever a belief prevails in the general necessity for confession, I would have them free to fill their aisles with confessionals."

Mr. Barton, with a sigh of relief, subsided into an easier attitude, and his face assumed a more intimate and less official expression.

"Sir Rawlin," he said, "it's my impression that you're a man after our own heart."

"Perhaps," Sir Rawlin replied, judiciously turning the conversation to a question somewhat less direct, "my own sacerdotalism goes farther even than yours; for if we have priests at all, my own view is that they should be celibate."

Mr. Barton reflected and made a slight grimace, indicative of hesitation rather than of substantial disagreement.

"I am not," he said, "in favour of any general prohibition. I have seen amongst the married clergy many beautiful lives. But I pray and have worked for the growth of celibate Orders, and I look on celibacy as a part of my own personal vocation."

"I was only," said Sir Rawlin, "giving utterance to a sort of pious opinion, which has, after all, much to say for itself. Celibacy was obligatory on all the priests of Isis, and even the fiery Tertullian, as you may perhaps recollect, declared that their chastity might be a lesson to many Christians."

Mr. Barton's face lit up with a sudden brotherliness, and the last trace of a frost, which had been slowly melting, disappeared.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "so you read the Fathers, do you? How nice now! Yes, the Fathers—there are plenty of them on my shelves. If we wish for corporate reunion, it is to them we must go back. Ah, Rome, Rome—separated from us simply by the perverse pretensions of her Vatican, and putting artificial restrictions round the treasures of her spiritual life!"

"I noticed your Fathers," said Sir Rawlin, "while I waited for you. I noticed also your architectural pictures; and I wanted to ask you what is that bit up there, with the buttresses and the three windows? The arches are Norman, but the ornamentation is early English."

Mr. Barton rose with alacrity and turned to the picture indicated. "Dear, dear," he said, "this is nicer still. You're a student of architecture also. Fancy your noticing that! I hope you'll allow me to show you our own church some day. Well, that bit is a part of the cathedral at Kirkwall—beautiful, huge, red cathedral, looking out from its narrow isthmus over its two seas. Changes in architectural style reached the Orkneys so slowly, that, though Kirkwall Cathedral took four hundred years to build, we find the round Norman arch surviving there to the very last, though the details of ornamentation had changed. Next to that picture, if all this is not

boring you, is another queer example of very much the same thing It's the church built by the Goths at Narranco, in the north of Spain. Do you make out what the Christian builders have been doing? They've been actually copying some of the details of a Roman temple. Do you see how they've placed the altar? Delightfully quaint, isn't it? But, my dear Sir Rawlin, aren't we rather straying from our muttons—our political muttons, I mean? Or may we suppose that we understand each other? I think we may; but I should just like to ask you one thing. There has been a rather tiresome business going on here lately. We have in Southquay what they call a Scientific Institute. This, in the old days, was all very well in its way; but for the last five years —it began before I came here—the trustees of the Institute and the trustees of the local Museum have been putting their heads together, and have started in the Museum Buildings a succession of lectures which are not scientific, although they profess to be so. I don't know that the lecturers ever openly attack revelation, but they deal with history, even sacred history, and with natural history also—indeed, with everything, just as though revelation did not exist. Well, after all, this might not have done much harm, for I believe that at these lectures the attendance was refreshingly poor; but within these last two years, as you very likely know, some old bones have been discovered in a cavern close to the church here; and last Christmas there was a specially precious discovery—the vertebræ of a mammoth and some chipped pieces of flint. Possibly the mammoth had been gnawing them. This has not yet transpired. Anyhow, the long and short of it is that I have encountered a storm of abuse, because, acting for my vicar, I've refused the use of a little hall of ours to a conference of scientific free-thinkers, who want to exhibit these remains, merely—for they can have no other possible object—merely as an excuse for another of their childish attacks upon the Bible. Now, you would wish, I hope, that the Church should be mistress of her own buildings, and free to refuse the use of them for any purpose which she condemns."

"I think," said Sir Rawlin, "that to expect a body like the Church to lend its buildings to people who want to undermine its principles, is like asking the House of Commons to lend its cellars to Guy Fawkes."

"In one way, of course," said Mr. Barton, again shrugging his shoulders, "it's not a bad thing to allow this so-called science to expose itself to sensible people by proclaiming its own absurdities; but it's not the business of the Church to provide it with the means of doing so, and the remedy has its dangers. You know those two boys at Cliff's End—Lady Susannah's nephews. I don't believe that at bottom there's very much harm in either of them, but they are both infected

—even the youngest one—with this cant of what they call science, and what is really the old materialism in its crudest and absurdest form. The younger one—little jackanapes!—actually said in my hearing that faith was an affection of the nerves, and that the human conscience was so much cellular tissue. One doesn't so much blame them as those from whom they pick this up. The chatter of those boys is really not more absurd than what a certain class of professors are gravely preaching to-day to artisans who are hardly worse educated than themselves. Well, Sir Rawlin, as for you, I felt sure of your answer. You'd have the Church the mistress of her own buildings. I believe that, if you consent to stand, the Church party will vote solid for you. And now, what say you to a cigarette? Let me offer you my one luxury; and may I ask you to give me your opinion on a matter of a different kind? I have in this parcel some books which have been sent me as samples of binding. Which of the bindings do you prefer? The books are little manuals, which I'm going to give to my Confirmation classes."

"I should think," said Sir Rawlin, "that the red would keep cleaner than the white. I can't help seeing the price. For one and fourpence they're astonishing. But surely—may I look at that other?—the purple one with gilt edges—you can't get a thing like that for the same money."

Mr. Barton, exhibiting some slight trace of reluctance, produced the book in question—a masterpiece of subdued daintiness.

"No," he said; "I'm afraid one can't. And even if one could—well, one doesn't wish to be snobbish, and a respecter of persons; but, as you said just now, the poorer children—it's not their fault—do make their things piggy: so one can't treat everybody in exactly the same way. This little book—I think it's as pretty as could be—is, to tell you the truth, designed for the young lady with whom I saw you walking yesterday. She is amongst those whom I am about to prepare for Confirmation, and she will, of course, take care of it. A beautiful nature that, unless I am much mistaken; though I gather that her religious education has been terribly neglected in some ways. By the way, let me show you another thing which I got for her, and which I think will help her. She has a curious natural sympathy with—where did I put this, now?—ah, there, on the little table,—a curious sympathy with the Catholic conception of religion. Here the book is. It is called 'The Visions of the Saints.' The letterpress is very simple. What I want you to notice are the pictures. These modern processes—aren't they perfectly marvellous? Did you ever see anything more like actual miniatures? That's St. Angela of Foligno, with our Lord coming to her through the rose-bushes. Isn't the little robin sweet? Look how one or two of its little red feathers are rumpled. That's our Lord giving

the aromatic gum to St. Gertrude, in order that her breath might be no less sweet to Him than her prayers. That one again—I should like you to examine that through a magnifying glass. Our Lord's dress, as He kisses St. Sylvia's hair—do you notice the gold and the red lines in the border? You can see that the gold line is a piece of stiff braid, *appliqué*. And between the folds of the robe—do you make out what that is? It's the face of St. Francis, which she saw painted on our Lord's breast. But I mustn't bore you any longer with this. Perhaps you'd like to take a look round my crib."

The suggestion being accepted, he led the way into a smaller room.

"Here," he said, "is my inner den—my cell."

The floor was of bare, stained boards. The only furniture was a couple of hard oak chairs, monastic in pattern, but affecting no antiquity; a small table with a stool before it, apparently used for kneeling; and a desk supporting a rosary, some devotional books, and a manuscript, the window which lit it opening on a neat little patch of garden. The only decoration on the whitewashed walls was a crucifix, the figure being of the cheapest plaster.

"I always think," said Mr. Barton, seeing that Sir Rawlin noticed it, "that there's something rather jolly in a poor common thing like that. I like to feel that I use in my own devotions nothing not in reach of the poorest. I allow myself an old Spanish one—a really fine work of art—in my library. Across the passage is my refectory. Would you like to have a peep at that? Not large, is it? I can just cram in three people at a pinch. Generally there is only one. And now, if you must go, good-bye. As soon as your own plans are settled, we might arrange a little practical work together. I've done some work, both as a canvasser and an organizer, in more than one election already."

As soon as Mr. Barton was alone, he became a changed man. The expression which had accompanied his use of such artificially familiar words as "nice" and "sweet" and "crib," or of "jolly" in its schoolboy sense, altogether disappeared. The priest came out in his face; the receiver of calls faded. Returning to his library with eyes absorbed and solemn, he sat down by the writing-table, his chin resting heavily on his hand.

Mr. Barton possessed one of those æsthetic and emotional temperaments which, closely connected as they are with the higher developments of sanctity, are known to be often the source of hopeless and unnamed corruption; but from such a result he was saved by certain snows of the spirit, which made any kind of corruption in his own case impossible, and he had gone through life with the gait of an untempted Galahad.

His eyes for a moment rested on the picture of the clear-faced

chorister—one of his old school friends; and he thought of the November walks during which, on their return to chapel, they had seen amongst the amethyst of the sunset the battlements of the New Jerusalem. Then his attention strayed to the photograph of the monument of his mother—his mother, the only woman whose kiss he had ever known, and through whom alone womanhood, as distinct from manhood, had ever made to him any distinct appeal.

Then little by little his thoughts took a new direction. They went back to the Sundays of last Advent—the period when, in connection with various charities, his acquaintance with Lady Susannah and her family had first ripened into intimacy. It was then that he acquired the habit of walking with her and Miss Arundel, after morning service on Sunday, to Cliff's End for luncheon. Those charming Christian women—the sense of rest and refreshment they produced in him was jarred by nothing but the presence of the two boys, who troubled him at moments by exciting in him a stir of impatient pity. The fields and the orchards, through which their Sunday path lay, were idyllic for him with gracious memories. At last a morning had come—it was the morning of Christmas Day—when, awaiting him at the side door, together with his two accustomed friends, was a third figure which was new to him—that of a graceful girl, dressed with a delicacy which appealed to his sense of colour—a girl in whom natural vivacity seemed to contend with lassitude, and who looked at him, the moment he met her, with instinctively sympathetic eyes. They had all gone back together through the fields, to eat Lady Susannah's turkey, carrying with them pleasant recollections of arches red with holly-berries. And this girl, somewhat to his surprise, had contentedly walked beside him, as though it were a privilege to listen to him, even when he spoke most seriously. After luncheon, at her aunt's request, she had sung, and he had given her, with the precision of an expert, a few friendly hints relating to the management of her voice.

His intimacy thenceforward with the family at Cliff's End had deepened. He had soon begun to discuss the girl with her aunt, and had been deeply touched by the little which he was able to gather as to her circumstances. "Her father," Lady Susannah had said—"she isn't my own niece really—was in old days a great friend of mine; but for ever so many years he has been obliged to live abroad, and I have not seen him since his marriage. This child will have quite a fortune. Her rooms have been fitted up with things of her own here, which, I hope, means that I may be allowed to keep her indefinitely. But if she doesn't get stronger—or, at all events, if there's a serious relapse—she's to be sent back to her parents, and I've promised to take in her sister—or her half-sister. That is really the relationship. There is some difficulty, it seems, in having both

at home together. I can't tell why, still I have my suspicions. Mr. Barton," she had added, with a somewhat trembling voice, "this is in the strictest confidence—it will help you to understand things which are too painful to be dwelt upon—I can't help thinking that the other one may be not legitimate. Poor child, that's not her fault, if it is so. But, Mr. Barton, help me to keep Nest here. Encourage her to sing. Anything that interests her is good for her, so long as it's not exciting. And then, though I can see that she's religious, I doubt if she's had much instruction. She told me she hadn't been confirmed, and could therefore not take the sacrament."

Mr. Barton had felt, as he listened to this account, that his own first impressions with regard to the girl were justified. Her eyes had at once appealed to him; he now knew the reason why. They were eyes looking for something which they had not yet found. The world had given her of its best, but the world could not give her peace. Here was a lamb bleating for the pastures that alone could satisfy, and the Divine will had led her to him, that he might be to her as the good shepherd. He had accordingly, at first with a distant kindliness, won the confidence which she was not slow to give him, by advising her father about her singing. Finally, with much tact, he had approached the subject of Confirmation; and the response he met with went to his heart at once. He had opened, so it seemed to him, a well of profound emotion. He had unsealed a secret fountain. And this emotion, accompanied as it was with charms and graces essentially feminine, and to him absolutely novel, had soon caused him to regard her with an almost paternal solicitude, sharply distinguished from, and yet not wholly incomparable to, those high and equal friendships, and that passion of filial worship, which, apart from religious fervour, had been the deepest of his past experiences.

His formal preparation, both of her and his other charges, was not to begin till after his return from London, where his presence would be shortly demanded by important ecclesiastical business; but he had lent her, and had been delighted to find that she read with interest and intelligence, some simple books on the history and general teaching of the Church; and meanwhile he had no desire to hasten matters. In the quiet family circle, in which alone he knew her, he felt that she was, except for her health, safe. He found comfort even in something which otherwise at times perplexed him—a maturity in her bearing, her manner, her social judgments, incongruous with her spiritual simplicity; for herein he discerned a security for her against the influence of her boy cousins. Indeed, he had often told himself that she, with her worldly aplomb, instead of being influenced by them, would laugh them out of their absurd follies.

All this was passing through his mind now, and, as he thought of her, filled him with a new accession of tenderness. Taking up the little manual he designed for her, he touched its violet binding lightly and reverently with his lips. "Through her," he said to himself, "it has, by God's grace, been given to me to see better into the needs of all childhood."

This reflection was still filling his mind, when his maid appeared at the door, and informed him that his lunch was ready.

"Mrs. Curtis says, sir," she added, "that, according to your orders, she hasn't sent up nothing but sardines; but I was to mention that, if you wished it, she could do you a nice chop."

"Thank you," said Mr. Barton, laughing. "A sardine will be quite enough;" and before betaking himself to his banquet, he remained for a few moments on his knees.

CHAPTER VI

As for Sir Rawlin, he too, like Mr. Barton, when left to himself again, became a different man. Having paid a mental tribute to many of Mr. Barton's qualities, and indeed to his general character, which, despite certain trivial mannerisms, had surprised, interested, and impressed him, he became a prey to reflections less agreeable to the self-esteem of a man of the world, a philosopher, and a prospective statesman. Miss Vivian's behaviour to him on the Drive forced itself on his thoughts afresh, and caused him more annoyance than he was at all willing to recognize. This mere child, this companion of romping schoolgirls, this future member of a Confirmation class, had not merely presumed to reduce him to the condition of an affronted boy, but had shown him that the situation which he had resolved so solemnly to avoid was actually nothing more than a ludicrous imagination of his own. No doubt by way of compensation she had removed the ground of his self-reproaches—a fact for which he found himself hardly so grateful as he might have been. But this was not enough. Before he reached his hotel he had determined that, if he met her again, he would with the utmost good humour put her in her proper place; and that her acquaintance should in no case figure amongst the interests of his stay in Southquay.

When he entered the hotel, however, her image was again obtruded on him. Lying on his luncheon-table was the letter from Lady Susannah, which Miss Arundel had mentioned as on the way to him. It consisted of a cordial request that he would lunch with her that day week. "So, you see," she added, "I am following your advice already, and I hope our young lady will benefit by it. I shall have George Carlton with me; and am asking a few friends also." He accepted the invitation with a pleasure which he was not over-careful to analyze, and he was meanwhile so absorbed by practical business that the very existence of Cliff's End and its inmates was as often as not forgotten by him.

Thus the week went by, and the appointed day arrived. The luncheon-hour was half-past one; and Lady Susannah, some twenty minutes earlier, decorated with a locket which she reserved for great

occasions, was alternately knitting and fidgeting in a shabby little green boudoir, when she heard a sharp pull being given to the front-door bell; and the butler a moment later ushered in Mr. Barton.

"Dear Mr. Barton," said Lady Susannah, "how good of you to have come early as I asked you."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Barton, in his accent of mundane affability, "it's so dear of you to have bidden me at all."

"Sit down, please," said Lady Susannah, as she snatched rather nervously at her knitting. "I want to say a word or two to you about my niece, Nest."

Mr. Barton's drawing-room smile at once left his lips. His face became grave and anxious.

"Well," he said, "tell me. I am listening."

"You know," his hostess proceeded, "how easily things upset her—a clap of thunder, or any mental excitement. Still, on the whole—you must have noticed this yourself, seeing her as you do at intervals—she has for the last month or so been steadily getting better; and for the first day or two after her fright in the hockey-field—that's just eight days ago—she was brighter and stronger than I'd ever seen her before. But since then, she has somehow or other gone back again. She's listless, and hardly eats; and what I specially wished to tell you is this: I've just discovered by accident that she's taken to stealing away and spending hours by herself in your church. Now I myself should be just as sorry as you would to do anything which might interfere with her healthy religious impulses; but you know better than I do that such impulses may become exaggerated, and I'm sure from a doctor's letter, which her father sent me when she came here, that anything of that kind would in her case be most injurious."

"I should doubt," said Mr. Barton, dryly, "whether doctors were specially qualified to advise candidates for Confirmation. And yet—well—all things considered—it is possible, quite possible, that in this special case they may be right. You would wish me to speak to her, would you? I will do so gladly. With a little gentleness, I am sure I can put things straight."

"Dear Mr. Barton," said Lady Susannah, "I'm sure you can. May I tell you what I feel myself? For, of course, I see her every day. My own feeling is that besides physical exercise, like the hockey which was your suggestion, we ought to provide her with some healthy general interests—some society beyond that of her cousins."

"Certainly," said Mr. Barton, with alacrity; "there I am quite at one with you."

"Well," resumed Lady Susannah, "that's one of the reasons why I'm giving my little party. My cousin George Carlton always makes

things amusing. And Sir Rawlin is coming too. The other day his conversation really seemed to wake Nest up. I wish in Southquay we'd a few more people like him."

Mr. Barton smiled, and resuming his mundane manner noiselessly clapped his hands.

"Hear, hear," he said. "Sir Rawlin is a charming man. A man of his age, with his wide knowledge and experience, is precisely the kind of person it would do your niece good to meet—certain to interest, without any risk of exciting her. If you'll leave me to speak to her——"

But his speech was here cut short by the quick opening of a door, and Miss Vivian herself was before them—pale and slim and silken in the daintiest of Parisian blouses.

"My dearest and best of aunts," she said, "Nina is dying to speak to you about the flowers. I beg your pardon. Oh, Mr. Barton, it's you, is it? I very much hope I'm not interrupting business."

"I'll come this moment," said Lady Susannah, rising. "And you, my dear, meanwhile—will you stay here with Mr. Barton and entertain him?"

Mr. Barton's temperament gave him one great advantage, in respect both of wisdom and dignity, as a spiritual director of women. Women, though their company was congenial to him, pleased him mainly on account of their grace and sensitiveness, and appealed to him because he discerned in them a peculiar need for guidance. He could, therefore, treat them with a sympathy which never lapsed into sentiment, and in the special feeling which Miss Vivian by this time had excited in him, he was absolutely unconscious of anything but the solicitude of a jealous parent.

"I've been much concerned," he began, "to hear from Lady Susannah that you have, for the last few days, not been seeming quite so vigorous as we could wish."

"Fancy my aunt speaking to you about my absurd little ups and downs," replied the girl, with a languid laugh. "We all have them. But don't go and tell me, I entreat you, that I'm looking like an invalid to-day."

"My dear child," said Mr. Barton, gravely, yet with a touch of subdued playfulness, "I'm not a medicine man, so I won't tell you anything of the kind; but I am anxious to say a word or two to you personally, which I have just been saying about you to your aunt. It has come to my knowledge, though I have not seen it myself, that you have during the last few days been spending many hours in church. You won't accuse me of wishing to discourage religious meditation, but what I wish to say to you is this. You and I and all of us are essentially immortal souls, and these bodies of

ours are merely their perishable instruments. Still, so long as we remain on God's earth, it is only by using these instruments that we can play our appointed parts; and if they show signs of weakness we must not rashly overstrain them, even in our ardour to work for Divine things. We should be breaking the spades that God has given us, instead of keeping them to till His vineyard."

"Yes, yes," said Miss Vivian, looking down at her bracelet, "I can see the sense of that."

"Well," Mr. Barton continued, "as I was just now saying to your aunt, what we want is to see you recovering the equable tone and cheerfulness which anybody at your age, with a good, clear conscience, ought to have; and we think—your aunt in this entirely agrees with me—that what would be good for you is not physical recreation only, like the hockey, but the stimulus also of a little pleasant society. I think we might venture to say a little social distraction, such, for instance, as the conversation, which would take you out of yourself, of your aunt's friend Sir Rawlin Stantor."

"I'm afraid," said Miss Vivian, "that a man so experienced as Sir Rawlin will not want to add to his experiences that of wasting his time on me. Hark! the door-bell. They're beginning to come already. I must rush up to my room to finish myself. Mr. Barton, thank you very much. I'm apt to get morbid, and then I go all to pieces. You shan't see me do that at luncheon to-day, anyhow."

Some ten minutes after this conversation had ended, Sir Rawlin, a trifle late, was entering Lady Susannah's hall, and a sound from somewhere, like the cawing of a small rookery, suggested the general character of the company he was about to meet. Nearly every one, as soon as he found himself in the drawing-room, seemed to be talking with an odd and exaggerated industry, as though bent on making the utmost of an opportunity that rarely came. The hero of the moment appeared to be a little elderly dandy, with a very dark wig and a feminine note in his voice, who was delighting a circle near the fireplace with a sort of dictatorial facetiousness. His hands glistened with rings, he called Lady Susannah "Dear thing," and on realizing Sir Rawlin's presence skipped forward to greet him, with a gesture of elegant recognition.

Sir Rawlin assured himself, by appealing to Oswald Arundel, that this was Mr. George Carlton. "Mrs. Morriston Campbell," the boy went on confidentially, "has just discovered that he has a little post about court, and is now swallowing his witticisms as if they were so much manna. Shall I tell you who some of the others are? Those two ladies talking to Mr. Barton are the authoresses. The fresh-coloured parson, with the high bald forehead, who looks pink with luncheon before he has begun to eat, is Mr. Robinson. The girl in the corner, with crushed-strawberry cheeks, is Elvira, a love of Mr.

Hugo's, who goes to school at Miss Aldritch's, and that monster near the window—do look at him—is Colonel O'Brian, her father."

Sir Rawlin's own desire was rather to discover Miss Vivian, but failing to see her anywhere, he consented to examine the Colonel. Colonel O'Brian, though the widowed parent of seven upstanding daughters, one of whom had married the son of an Irish peer, was one of the most striking dancers at the public balls of Southquay. With his flourishing moustache and startling Norfolk jacket he had a buoyant air of conquest over everything fair and feminine; and he was plainly engaged now in a search for some fitting victim. Sir Rawlin's attention, however, was presently called elsewhere by Mr. Carlton, who beset him with good wishes for his success in his parliamentary candidature, and who went on to observe delicately in a tone of shocked distress that "he had always thought Radicalism so dreadfully insincere and selfish. Why," he said, "can't the people keep in their proper places, and leave us in ours? That's what I can't make out. So meddlesome, and so unnecessary." But just as he was diverging from this important question to compliment Lady Susannah on the stitch of a piece of knitting, Sir Rawlin's ear was caught by a light laugh, and, turning round, he perceived that Miss Vivian was at last present, and was seemingly happy in the toils of the enterprising Colonel. The Colonel's very back was eloquent of enviable success; and he was asking her, in tones indicative of a mutual understanding, how it was that he had never met her at any of that winter's dances, when the door was opened, the announcement of luncheon came, and a movement without formality took place to the dining-room.

The guests, whose positions at the table were marked out for them by their names, had, whilst Mr. Robinson said a cheerful grace by request, settled themselves and unfolded their napkins, before Sir Rawlin discovered that Miss Vivian was seated next him. In the drawing-room he had merely exchanged with her a perfunctory salute from a distance, and now she was again monopolized by the Colonel, who was her other neighbour. To this arrangement, moreover, she herself seemed a willing party, for, having curtly thanked Sir Rawlin, who moved to give her more room, she forthwith turned away from him, and surrendered herself to the familiarities of his rival. Such behaviour exceeded what Sir Rawlin had thought possible, and he naturally determined to pay her no further attention.

Mr. Barton, who was seated opposite, noticed Miss Vivian's conduct, and noticed it with surprised anxiety. His social taste was superior to the society in which he had been brought up. Though he was no connoisseur in flirtations, the demeanour of the Colonel shocked him; and Miss Vivian's conduct in tolerating, still more in encouraging it, annoyed him as though she were inflicting some

meaningless disfigurement on herself. When he had spoken to her about social interests he had not thought of things like this. Placed at a distance from her though he was, he resolved that as soon as possible he would do her the salutary service of disengaging her attention from its present unworthy object. The natural turn of the conversation at last gave him his opportunity, by introducing a topic which was quite beyond the Colonel's grasp.

"We have," said Mr. Robinson, taking advantage of a general silence, "been talking down here about churches. Barton, we'll appeal to you. You're a pundit in such matters. What should you say, in an architectural sense, was the most interesting church existing?"

Mr. Barton felt at once that Miss Vivian's eyes were on him. "I think," he said judicially, after a moment's reflection, "that, if we put aside the question of size, I should give my vote to St. Ephraim's of the Forty Pillars."

Mr. Robinson put his hand to his ear. "I didn't," he said, "quite catch the name. In which diocese is that?"

"It was built," said Mr. Barton, "by Guy, Count of Cilicia. It lies forty-five miles north-east of Tarsus."

Mr. Robinson, with a slight grimace, let the sacred subject drop; and another was forthwith started which seemed of more poignant interest. This was the celebrated Lord Cotswold, diplomatist, statesman, and writer on scientific philosophy, not wholly disregarded by those even who called him a charlatan, but at one time much criticized as a notoriously irregular husband. It was now definitely announced that he had taken a house at Southquay, though nobody quite knew which, and was shortly going to occupy it with a large party of friends. Mrs. Morriston Campbell, with an air of superior knowledge, declared that Lord Cotswold was of course quite out of society, and was somewhat taken aback when the courtly Mr. George Carlton, in a voice which arrested everybody, said to Lady Susannah—

"You remember, dear Susie, Lord Cotswold married a cousin of ours—a thoroughly fourth sort of cousin—and treated her quite too abominably—went off with the scullery-maid, or the mangling-maid—so shocking, all blue and soap-suds. It killed poor Maria of appendicitis twenty-five years afterwards. I always say it was through Maria that appendicitis came into our family."

Whilst Lady Susannah, amongst a chorus of applausive titters, was gurgling, "George, George, you really — you really mustn't. Isn't he too dreadful?" Mr. Barton observed that Miss Vivian was studying her empty plate, and quite ignoring the Colonel, who was saying to her with confidential knowingness—"Hush! you and I mustn't talk about Lord Cotswold. He's a very fie-fie gentleman —very hoity-toity too. I met his lordship at dinner once at the Vice-regal, at Dublin."

This last observation was so obviously meant to be public that Mr. Barton lost no time in replying to it.

"Who," he said, "may I ask you, was Lord-Lieutenant then? I too am a native of the distressful country myself."

The Colonel was delighted to answer; and Miss Vivian, as Mr. Barton noticed, relapsed once more into a seemingly apathetic silence.

Suddenly Sir Rawlin was conscious that a low voice, which might have been addressed to the table-cloth, was saying close beside him—

"Why have you never been to see me—I mean us—again?"

He started and turned towards her, but his eyes met only a pale and half-averted cheek.

"See you!" he repeated. "Why, you surely can't have forgotten it. I did see you. I saw you with extreme plainness, on the very morning after the day on which I first met you."

"You saw me!" she exclaimed, with a momentary glance at him through her eyelashes. "You saw me? When—where?"

"On the New Drive," he answered, "when I was walking by with a friend. I was longing to stop and talk to you, but you wouldn't even shake hands with me. You looked me up and down, and simply refused to speak."

A light seemed to be dawning on her. "Are you telling me the truth?" she asked, in a tone which was still doubtful, but from which the reserve was melting. "That must have been the day when I tired myself running uphill, and went half to sleep at the top—Nina says—for a minute or two. It's all my tiresome nerves. In the mist—do you remember?—you saw what a fool they made of me. You weren't angry with me then. I wonder if you feel that you are going to forgive me now?"

She did not look at him as she spoke, but, at a very slight angle, her head had been inclined towards him, as though she were waiting for him to confess to her in some faint accent audible to herself alone.

"There is nothing to forgive," he said, seemingly absorbed in his breadcrumbs; "but even if there were, I should forgive you."

No ordinary observer would have imagined that they had exchanged a word.

Presently Sir Rawlin's arm was aware of a hand laid on it, whose momentary contact was charged with appeal and intimacy, and a voice, which seemed whispering a confidence to him, was saying, "I want some water." They looked into each other's eyes, as though they had planned a meeting. They were once more all they had been on the day on which they had met first.

Mr. Barton, meanwhile, having perceived, in a general way, that Sir Rawlin at last had supplanted the objectionable Colonel, had contentedly turned his attention in other directions, and might hardly have been tempted to observe Miss Vivian again if Mr. Robinson,

in a voice expressing broadness of mind, had not referred to the newly found Southquay mammoth, for the purpose of a lecture on whose remains Mr. Barton had refused his hall. Hereupon Oswald Arundel, with an excellent imitation of guilelessness, took occasion to observe that the cavern in which the bones had been found must be directly under the foundations of Mr. Barton's own abode.

"Did you ever yourself see," he added, "one of these monstrous skeletons complete?"

Mr. Barton turned on him with the sharpness of a sarcastic schoolmaster who unfortunately was without a birch.

"No," he said, "I never did. But I once saw a giraffe. That was quite big enough for me."

The boy with a covert smile glanced in the direction of Miss Vivian. Mr. Barton glanced anxiously in the same direction also, to assure himself that she gave no signs of sympathy with her profane cousin. He saw in her no signs of consciousness that her cousin existed, but he saw in her something else which consigned mammoths to oblivion. The almost ostentatious levity, which had distressed him in her conversation with Colonel O'Brian, was gone, but there was something in her demeanour now which disturbed him far more deeply. What it was he did not know, but he felt his back turn cold, and somewhere or other over his skin ran little trickles of perspiration. With ears preternaturally sharpened, he could catch more or less what it was that Sir Rawlin was saying to her. Sir Rawlin's manner was precisely what he was sure it would be—the manner of an experienced man who was entertaining a clever child. Their topics, moreover, so he gathered, were commonplace, even trifling. But why, this being so, did she listen with such strange attention? She rarely looked at her companion, but her cheek was still slightly inclined towards him, as though messages were reaching her ears fraught with clandestine meanings, and withdrawing her into some world beyond Mr. Barton's reach. Once, indeed, she caught his eyes and smiled at him, but the smile seemed to reach him across some intervening water, as though she were a passenger leaning on the bulwarks of a ship, which already, with her own consent, was carrying her away for ever from him. For the rest of the meal he was almost completely silent; and afterwards, having managed to outstay all the rest of the company, he said to her in a manner so constrained that she hardly recognized it as his own—

"Will you take a turn with me out of doors? I have something more to say to you."

With a docile gravity the girl acquiesced at once. She seemed willing at that moment to do anything that would please anybody.

"Would you like," she said, "to wait for me at the garden door? I'll run up and put my things on, and be down in a few minutes."

CHAPTER VII

Mr. Barton, pacing the path on which the garden door opened, was too much absorbed in his thoughts to be impatient because he was kept waiting. Less than an hour ago he had felt that this spiritual child of his was nearer to himself than to any other human being—that all her deepest aspirations had submitted themselves to his quiet guidance. She now seemed so far off that he doubted whether his cry could reach her. What had produced the change? What reasonable explanation could he give of it? It never occurred to him for a moment to regard Sir Rawlin Stantor as having, in any personal sense, come between him and her. The disturbing factor was not Sir Rawlin himself, but some mysterious order of interests which he suggested to the girl's nature, and which exhibited that nature under new and alien aspects. Mr. Barton was still struggling with these reflections, which inflicted on him a pang of baffling spiritual jealousy, when the sound of a door roused him, and, turning round in his walk, he saw her on the path awaiting him.

Her aspect added to his trouble. She was transfigured from head to foot by a walking-dress and by grey-blue furs. All trace of the lassitude which he had noticed in her before luncheon had gone from her. In every poise and movement of her body was a certain elusive lightness, which suggested a challenge to life, a provocation to its delaying secrets. Her arched feet seemed somehow to be coquetting with the very ground she walked on. He perceived, however, as he drew near her, that a soft expectant seriousness rose into her eyes to greet him.

"At last," he said, attempting to make his voice conventional. "At last I can talk again to you."

The girl stared at him, as though the pain in his face was a riddle to her.

"Have I," she said, "been so very, very long? I couldn't get at my maid; but as soon as she came I raced. I'm very, very sorry. Mr. Barton, are you angry with me?"

"Angry!" said Mr. Barton. "If I'm angry with anybody, it's with myself. I hope those smart boots of yours are thick enough

for a rough walk. Let us go by the cliffs. We shall be alone there."

There was a brusque authority in his voice which startled, but did not displease her. She liked it incomparably better than his tone when he talked about a "medicine-man." She went with him in obedient silence, wondering what was about to happen. He did not speak till they had left the garden behind them, and had gone some way on the unfrequented path beyond.

At length he began in a hoarse, ill-modulated undertone. "I have," he said, "been haunted for the last two hours by a feeling that, when I talked to you before luncheon, I may have led you to mistake my meaning. Will you bear with me if, in all friendship, I try to explain myself a little better?"

"Please do," said the girl, gently. "I am always very anxious to listen to you."

"Perhaps," he resumed, in a voice more nearly normal, "I could make what I mean clearer, if you'd let me tell you what I take to be your own peculiar gifts and responsibilities—great responsibilities—gifts so precious and beautiful. Will you allow me to do that?"

Miss Vivian nodded permission. The request was of a kind which women do not often refuse.

"Well, then," said Mr. Barton, "if you won't mind my starting with one or two very trite observations, the composite nature of each of us, to speak roughly, has three parts. In the first place we have those surface qualities which come out in the give-and-take of our common daily intercourse. Then under these come those deeper gifts of the mind and heart which relate to artistic beauty, to the world of human knowledge, and to the ordinary human affections. And lastly, at the root of all, comes that part of us in virtue of which we turn to God. All these parts of us are essential to us in our present life; but the first and the second are good only in proportion as they minister to the third. In a general way all this, of course, is obvious. And now, shall I go on to your own case in particular? As to your surface qualities," he continued, "I need not say that you've a charm and a temper which make the surface virtues easy to you. What I want to bring home to you is—and you must allow me to speak quite plainly—that you are endowed to a degree still rarer with those mental, artistic, and emotional qualities also, of which I was just now speaking. To all that appeal which beauty makes to us through our human senses you are far more sensitive than most women, though very likely you may not know this."

Mr. Barton glanced anxiously at his companion, to see how his words affected her. Her face was averted, but a flush was visible on her cheek, and, he thought, a trace of moisture.

"You read Shelley," he went on. "You remember how Shelley describes the love of one poor human soul for another. 'The desire of the moth for the star'—that was what Shelley called it, and all our deepest and highest feelings for beauty are desires of the same kind. All the fair things of this fair world of the senses—even its ideal affections—make their deepest appeal to us by awakening some desire which they themselves cannot satisfy, but which carries us upwards and onwards to a far-off star beyond."

The girl turned to him with a quick comprehending smile. "I will quote Shelley too," she said.

"'Would'st thou me? And I replied
No, not thee.'"

"You have," said Mr. Barton, "penetrated to the very heart of my meaning. Well, that being so, I can easily make you understand the kind of advice which I wanted to give you before luncheon. Instead of distressing your nerves, as I think you may have been tempted to do, by brooding too much over what separates you from the Divine Nature, I was advising you for the moment to exercise those natural faculties which, if exercised rightly, unite you to it: for God is the Supreme Beauty and the Supreme Intellect, as well as the Supreme Holiness. Enjoy friendships and interesting pursuits and beauty; but enjoy them only because, and only in so far as, each of them carries you onwards to a something beyond itself—to that power, that purity, that love, of which it is the symbol or the faint reflection, and to which, under God, it is my great desire to guide you."

"I understand you," said Miss Vivian. "I understand every word. I'm only afraid you flatter me too highly."

"If," said Mr. Barton, quickly, "you think I am inclined to flatter you, you must give me the benefit of your misconception, and not think me captious or unfair if I venture on a word of criticism. At luncheon to-day, sitting opposite to you as I was, I could not help from time to time observing you, and it seemed to me—I'm thinking, of course, only of the earlier part of the time—I don't refer to the latter." Mr. Barton here exhibited some signs of hesitation. "I mean," he proceeded, "the time when you seemed, if you'll let me say so, to be paying an attention to somebody which was disproportionate to the merits of his conversation. You were hardly doing justice on that occasion either to yourself or to my advice to you."

"I'm sorry," said Miss Vivian, gravely, but with an air of considerable relief, "that you noticed a silly thing like that; but I had to talk to the man, and I couldn't help drawing him out a little. All

the same, you are quite right; and you are kind in having found fault with me."

"My dear child," said Mr. Barton, "your extraordinary quickness in appreciating shades of meaning makes it easy to talk to you. If what you did had been done by many other girls, I should probably not have noticed it; but you have exceptional gifts, and these bring with them exceptional responsibilities—especially at this time when you are, of your own free will, about to prepare yourself for the reception of a great sacrament. And that reminds me. Before I begin my regular talks about Confirmation, which I hope to do as soon as I return from London, may I ask you to read the little manual which I sent you some days ago? I am glad that you liked the binding. I am glad also that the 'Visions of the Saints' pleased you."

"Oh," exclaimed the girl, "that is beautiful. I've not thanked you half enough for it. I look at it every morning. All the faces in it—do you remember the martyrs in Paradise with their eyes fixed on the Lamb?—seem to be full of that very longing for the Beyond which you were speaking about just now. It's like nothing else in the world."

Mr. Barton, instead of making any immediate reply, began putting his hand into one of his great-coat pockets.

"I want you," he said at length, "in addition to that book, to let me add another, not so ornamental, but still, I hope, it may be useful to you. It's a very little book indeed, written or compiled by myself. I only got it this morning, and I brought it with me, meaning to give it to you. Will you take it? You can carry it in your muff."

"How good of you!" said Miss Vivian, simply. "Yes, you see my muff will hold it."

"May the reading of that book," said Mr. Barton, gravely, "be blessed to you. It is not a book for all. But I haven't quite done yet. I should like to offer you one little gift more. We were talking just now about the senses. Let us take the sense of hearing. You, being musical, know that there are musics of many kinds, some of which secularize the emotions, while others sanctify them. With all the things of sense the case is much the same. Take smells, for instance. To me the smell of wallflowers always brings back my childhood, and the mother at whose knees I said the first prayers I can remember. Another case in point is the peculiar smell of incense. That smell, as a matter of general experience, has, though we can't tell why, a special religious suggestiveness."

"How true that is!" said Miss Vivian. "The smell of incense touches one like an organ."

"I have," Mr. Barton went on, "found, when the worries of

business made it difficult for me to turn my mind to prayer, or to the writing of a sermon, that the burning of a few grains of incense was very effective in surrounding me with the required atmosphere. I have, therefore, besides the book brought this packet of incense for you, which you might use in the same way. There, take it. It will go into your muff, too. It has been formally blessed in the manner enjoined by our ancient Church, so treat it reverently. Don't burn it for fun. Try it, and if it doesn't help you, send me back what remains of it. And now," said Mr. Barton, suddenly stopping short and facing her, "I must take you no farther. I have much to do, and I leave to-night for London. Let us turn. I'll come with you as far as the field-path which will take me home over the hill."

Both of them silent, they began to retrace their steps. Miss Vivian, with a pensive smile, readjusted the packages in her muff. Mr. Barton's lifted eyes were fixed intently on the sky. At last, without turning to her, he spoke.

"When I am alone," he said, "in the bare room which I shall occupy, I shall always think of you and pray for you. When we go to meet God through death, we go to meet Him alone. When we go to meet Him in life, we must each of us go alone also; but we are not alone, even in the human sense, if another soul, whom we have helped, is going on the same journey. And now, here is my path. Here we must say good-bye. In a fortnight's time, or less, I hope to be back again; and meanwhile you'll remember, will you, what I've been trying to say to-day? Whatever you may find beautiful, interesting, pleasure-giving, in the life around you—in things, in men, in women—let your heart fix itself on such of these things only as do not hinder it from giving itself to that Heart of Hearts, in the love of which we both may share, and in which nothing can come between us. My child, good-bye, good-bye. You'll give me your hand, won't you, in token that you recognize me as a friend?"

For the girl, this last request, natural and inevitable as it was, had in it something of a faintly unwelcome incongruity; but, ashamed of a lurking wish to avoid the parting ceremony, she complied with a frank, almost with a tender, grace; and the look which he cast back at her, as he took the path up the hillside, was grave with a grateful happiness.

As for her, her face which, during the walk, had been that of one in contact with some being of a different order, relaxed its expression somewhat as soon as she found herself alone; and presently hearing her cousins' voices in the garden, she lingered for some minutes on the cliff till the sounds had died away, and then stole back to the house, where she hid herself in her own sitting-room.

Relatively to the means that had been available for gratifying the girl's taste, it was not a room that exhibited any very great extravagance; but it formed a curious contrast to Lady Susannah's threadbare boudoir. Delicate gilt brackets with china on them, and landscapes in which stone-pines, villas, palms, and olives, shone green and white and grey against blue Mediterranean backgrounds, gave a gay aspect to the surfaces of the pale, silk-like wall-paper. The large bow-window was enlivened with flowered chintz curtains; and chintz-covered chairs matching them were thrown into pleasant relief by the pile of a soft red carpet. Books delicately bound stood in small cases on the tables. A chair shaped like a prie-dieu secluded itself in one corner. In another, a half-finished water-colour displayed itself conspicuously on an easel; and on a stool in the window were some drawing-blocks and an artist's case of colours.

From her muff, which she tossed aside, she produced Mr. Barton's packages. The incense—it had been placed in a tin box made for lozenges—claimed her attention first. Having deposited an ember of wood in a brass saucer that was on the chimney-piece, she sprinkled the red glow with a few grains of the compound. A faint fragrance rose from it, which she sniffed like a child experimenting with a new toy. Then, as if satisfied with the result, she seated herself near the window, and turned to Mr. Barton's book. It was a small, slim volume, bound in leather that smelt of cedar. The title of it was "The Secret Way." She opened it at random, and the first passage on which her eyes lit startled her.

She had several times during her late walk with Mr. Barton sought relief for her feelings by looking away from him at the sea. The sea had been blue and shining. Her eyes had rested themselves on the sails whose whiteness was going down where the two firmaments touched each other; and her mind had been filled with something of that saddening yet pleasurable exaltation which, in most sensitive natures, is produced by the same spectacle. The words in Mr. Barton's book at which the pages opened were these—

"This expanse of waves lying against the far-off sky, and those ships with their dying sails, trouble us who watch them with a vague feeling that they are beautiful. But in what does this beauty consist? It does not consist in mere water, or mere light, or mere squares and triangles of canvas, or even in all three combined. It consists in a suggestion to the soul, not in impressions on the senses. Our souls, stirred by the imagination, long to follow those ships; for to us it seems that they are going to some better country—to some land of the heart's desire. But in the lands where the journeys of these ships end, the heart is not satisfied. Sorrow will come down and meet them as soon as they touch the quays. So it is with all the fair

things of nature. They awake in us a hunger which they themselves cannot satisfy. What, then, can satisfy it? As Augustine says, 'He only, by whom all these things were made.'"

Miss Vivian turned the page, and the same train of thought repeated itself.

"My heart spoke to my heart, and said to it, 'What desirest thou?' At dawn in the garden I desire the scented rose of the earth. In the evening I desire the shining rose of the sky. My heart, thou dost not contemplate these things in vain, but thou dost desire them in vain; for all these things are without thee, and can never be thine. Rather desire that which is in them and in thee also. This will not leave thee hungering. This will enthral and fill thee, till thou sayest, 'Spouse of my soul, I faint, I can endure no more.'"

The book dropped from her hands. Outside a flush was beginning to mantle in the west. Across a reach of water, a promontory with houses and a few lights on it, was turning into a blur of purple; and the evening was opening up its faint illimitable distances. She rose, went again to the fireplace, reopened the box of incense, and repeated her former experiment on a bolder and larger scale. A blue smoke shot up from the glowing embers copiously. She lifted the brass saucer, and, waving it to and fro, soon felt herself to be inhaling the odour of all sanctuaries. Yielding to its subtle spell, she turned almost involuntarily to her prie-dieu. The fur of her hat, as she knelt with her head bent forwards, almost touched her folded hands; and between her gloves and her hat, together with the smell of the incense, stole visions of lighted chancels, and mute women emerging from brown confessionals; and at last, mixed with the incense mist, a mist of another kind came to her closed eyelids from the gorse-bushes on a high hill. "My heart spoke to my heart," she murmured, "and it said to me, What desirest thou?"

Half an hour later she had descended to the schoolroom tea. Her cousins for some days had not seen her in such high spirits; and when Oswald proposed again to minister at the cat's altar, she contented herself with seizing a book and lightly boxing his ears.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

If the sequel to the luncheon party had been satisfactory to Mr. Barton, the close of that function itself had been not less so to Sir Rawlin. The healing of the wound which Miss Vivian had unintentionally inflicted on his vanity had healed at the same time the disquiet of his conscience also; and in order to render his peace of mind more absolute, he had been careful to check any undue expectations on her part by letting her know that, since he had decided on contesting the constituency, some time would elapse before his many engagements would allow him to look forward to the pleasure of visiting Cliff's End again. Indeed, these preoccupations proved quite engrossing enough to relegate even the thought of her to the background of the candidate's mind. It remained with him, nevertheless, like a rose worn in his button-hole, and led to certain actions the object of which was the continuance of his connection with her.

Sir Rawlin's appearance in Southquay as the hope of a political party coincided with the occurrence of two other events, both of which had been already arranged without reference to himself. Both these events, in a certain sense, were social. One of them was political as well.

The sacred fire of Conservatism was kept alive in the constituency, not only by the Association which concerned itself with the actual conduct of elections, but also by the local branch of a great national League, the object of which was, by means of periodical fêtes, to associate Conservative principles with ideas of popular happiness. Year by year, wherever it had a branch, the League thus celebrated the birthday of the statesman whose name it bore; and that anniversary being now but a few days distant, the Bath Saloons of Southquay had, long before Sir Rawlin's arrival, been secured for the occasion by the League's local Council. Some well-known members of Parliament had promised to make short speeches. Better still, a certain dazzling Marchioness, whose praise was in the papers as the

hostess of kings and princes, and whose photographs were as frequent in the shops as those of the most renowned actress, having taken a house at Southquay for a little consumptive daughter, had let it be known that she intended to be present also. Sir Rawlin accordingly was soon the recipient of a letter which urged on him that the fête would afford him an unrivalled opportunity of making a public appearance before a gathering of his future supporters. The Bath Saloons, moreover, on the night before the fête, were to be the scene of another gathering of a somewhat different kind—namely, a ball, which was to be as conservatively select as the fête was to be conservatively inclusive; and this function likewise he was specially requested to attend.

Both invitations he accepted; and now, after a week of drudgery, a morning at last arrived when he sat down to his breakfast with a day before him wholly at his own disposal, and when the post had contented itself with bringing him one letter and a packet only. Having read the first, and satisfied himself as to the contents of the second, he at once proceeded to scribble a hasty note. This he instructed his servant to deliver without delay, and, if possible, to bring back an answer. Meanwhile, seated by a window, with a sense of holiday in his heart, he looked down across the greenness of the crescent gardens at the sea, and felt the exhilaration of the spring stealing to him from a bowl of violets. He was still enjoying his reveries, when the return of his servant with a small note interrupted them. The note consisted of only a single sentence, to the effect that the writer would expect him as soon as he liked to come. He armed himself with the letter and packet which the morning's post had brought him, called for his hat and stick, and issued into the open air.

All the world seemed young, as the breath of the sea came up to him. He descended to the shore, along which, as the tide was low, a stretch of sand amongst boulders afforded a tempting path. Less than a mile away stood Cliff's End on its promontory. With desultory steps he moved forwards in that direction, pausing now and then to examine some pool among the rocks, in whose salt crystal sea-anemones wavered; and at last he found himself at the foot of the grey limestone heights, over which there peered a shrub or two of Lady Susannah's garden.

The letter and the packet which he had brought with him both related to members of Lady Susannah's family. Neither of them concerned Miss Vivian. They concerned the two boys, her cousins, and represented on his part a general feeling of amity, which, since the day of the luncheon party had been drawing him towards the whole household, and enveloping his thoughts of the girl in the atmosphere of its safe inclusiveness. As for his present appointment,

it was with Lady Susannah herself; and the hour being still a little premature for a visit, he conceived the idea of scrambling round the base of the promontory, and killing his superfluous time by exploring the coast beyond. In order, however, to accomplish the latter part of his programme, he found that it would be necessary to surmount a small intervening headland, towards which, on their farther side, the gardens of Cliff's End descended. On gaining the summit, through a crevice half masked by bushes, he was greeted by the sight of a cluster of Scotch firs, which had assumed a shape suggestive of the umbrella-pines of Italy, and seemed now to be pricking with their needles a Mediterranean sky. At the foot of one of the trunks, purplish and scaling into pink, Sir Rawlin was startled by perceiving a medley of other colours—a mass of creamy white, some starlike spots of gold, and a patch of redness like a poppy's. The whiteness was a garment enveloping a seated female figure, the spots of gold were buttons, the redness was a tilted cap. The figure was that of an artist, her head bent over a sketching-block, and her eyes fixed on her handiwork under cover of her long eyelashes.

A rustle of the bushes caused her to look up, and there came to her from Sir Rawlin's lips the simple greeting—"So there you are! Please," he went on, "don't get up and disturb yourself. Let me sit down by you and watch. Don't let the colour dry. Go on with the sky-line."

Her beauty once more astonished him. He ceased to wonder at any of his past indiscretions. At the same time, he resolved not to repeat them. Miss Vivian looked at him for a moment with eyes in which the light of pleasure was disturbing the languor of a dream. Then she resumed her work, but he noticed that her hand trembled, and the gilt buttons on her breast slowly rose and fell. At last she said—

"I can't go on: I am spoiling it. The sea should be far away—as far away as heaven; but look, one would think it was coming at one through the chinks of these odious bushes."

"Will you trust your brush to me?" he said. "I can make that right in a minute or two. Your drawing and your colouring are perfect."

She turned her head away, and for answer pushed the sketch towards him. With the touch of an expert, he proceeded to give strength to the foreground. The gorse, the cliff, and the brambles stood out and asserted themselves, and the sea with its turquoise bloom went floating into a breezy distance. Presently she turned again to him, and, her cheek almost touching his shoulder, she peered over his arm as he worked.

"It was dead," she whispered, "and you have made it live."

"Listen," he replied, in the accents of friendly common sense.

"Will you let me consult you about a really serious matter? I am going to consult your aunt about it, and I am waiting till I can decently call upon her. Oswald told me, or else you did, that, before he embarks on his profession, he is going for a time to Oxford—going there next autumn. Well, it occurred to me that it might be a pleasant and useful thing for him to have a little experience of diplomatic life beforehand; so I wrote to Sir Frank Paston, our Ambassador at Constantinople, to ask him if he would care to have a charming boy as a guest, or an extra secretary, or whatever we like to call it, for two or three months before his Oxford discipline begins. Sir Frank is in London, and I got his reply this morning. He is delighted with the idea; but I did not want to say anything to Oswald himself till I'd found out from your aunt whether he would be allowed to go."

The girl, who had been listening attentively, now sprang to her feet.

"Come," she exclaimed. "I will take you to Aunt Susannah at once. Tell me this—are you always helping somebody?"

Sir Rawlin laughed. "That," he said, "remains to be seen. I've something up my sleeve for you too, if I find that your aunt approves. Meanwhile will you give that packet to Mr. Hugo? You shall tell me afterwards what his face was like when he opened it."

Lady Susannah welcomed Sir Rawlin with a certain air of surprise, which made her pleasure in seeing him only the more evident. He at once explained his mission, as far as it related to Oswald, winding up with an account of his meeting with Miss Vivian under the fir trees.

"Sir Rawlin," she said, "you're a regular fairy godmother. Tell Oswald yourself about it. Nothing in the world could be better for him. I hope that thanks don't bore you, for mine are not over yet. A little while after you first met my niece, she had a sort of relapse. We thought she was going to be ill again. But this last week, in a really wonderful way, she has got back her health and spirits. You see how right you were in what you said to me about providing her with interests—social interests and so on. Yes, Sir Rawlin, I put it all down to you. Ever since that stupid little luncheon of mine, which was the outcome of your suggestions, Nest has been a different person."

"You have given me," said Sir Rawlin, "the exact encouragement I require; for, to tell you the truth, one of my reasons for coming here was to suggest to you for her benefit two dissipations more." He then went on to mention the coming fête. He begged that Lady Susannah and Miss Vivian would keep him in countenance by being present at it; and, finding that his first proposal was received with sufficient favour, he proceeded to broach the second. "Besides

the fête," he said, "another event is impending—a ball in honour of *mi-carème*—I believe an unusually good one. Now, why should Miss Vivian not also go to that? I thought I should have found your own name down in the list of patronesses."

"Oh," said Lady Susannah, with a plaintive deprecating smile, "balls are not at all in my line. But, upon my word, I don't know about Nest. George Carlton, who went on into Cornwall, is coming back to us; and there isn't a dowager in London who's a safer chaperon than he is. Let us ask Nest herself; for, of course, though I was remiss enough not to say this before, you'll stay and lunch with us—won't you?—and we can have it all out then."

Sir Rawlin was interrupted in his acceptance of this invitation by two sudden noises in the hall—that of an opening door, and that of an excited voice.

"Oh, Nest," called the voice—it plainly proceeded from Miss Arundel—"come into the schoolroom, do. Mr. Hugo has opened his parcel, and what do you think was in it? Sir Rawlin has had it sent from Vienna. It's a beautiful little tube of radium."

Sir Rawlin, on hearing this, leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"I declare," said Lady Susannah, "you're spoiling my whole family. Ah, there's Oswald outside." She rose and tapped the window. "Tell him your news while I get ready for luncheon. Oswald, my dear, come in. Here's some one who wants to speak to you."

The boy came as invited, and the luncheon-bell had not rung before he looked even happier than Sir Rawlin had hoped to see him. Nor was Mr. Hugo, who was found standing in the hall when Lady Susannah conducted Sir Rawlin to the dining-room, in a state less enviable than his brother's. His delight with his present was so great as to render his thanks inaudible, but his face was fossilized into a smile which his manhood was unable to subjugate. They had just seated themselves when Miss Vivian made her appearance. She hardly looked at Sir Rawlin, but her eyes were gay and shining, and her cheeks, as she slipped quietly into the vacant place beside him, coloured like a pink shell.

The boys showed a tendency to mask their respective exhilarations under covert witticisms at the expense of Miss Arundel's housekeeping; and Sir Rawlin, who seemed to have brought with him a general spirit of cheerfulness, soon proclaimed to his neighbour the secret with which he had lately tantalized her—namely, his two proposals relating to the fête and ball. Would anybody go to either? And who would go to which? All of them would go to the fête and hear Sir Rawlin speak. The future diplomatist would perhaps go to the ball. Miss Vivian would do so certainly, if cousin George Carlton would take her. Such was the conclusion arrived at to the satisfaction of everybody.

"And now," said Sir Rawlin, "a happy thought has struck me. Amongst the many odd things I've become in the course of the past fortnight, one, I believe, is the President of the Southquay Golf Club. Since, as I hear, the farmer up on the hill will not allow the young ladies the use of his field any longer, why should not Miss Vivian let golf take the place of hockey?"

"My dear Nest," said Miss Arundel, "golf would be just the thing for you. And you, Mr. Hugo, you used to play when you were at school. You might go too; and, if you are good, you might take Elvira. Elvira is coming after luncheon. She and you might show Nest the links, at all events; though, of course, as you're not members, they won't let you into the club-house."

Sir Rawlin suggested that, as his position of President probably gave him the right of introducing any friends he chose, he should go with them himself, and make a trial of his new privileges. "Do," said Lady Susannah; and so that matter was settled. Miss Elvira arrived, rosy, smiling, and muscular; and when she and Mr. Hugo had started leading the way, Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian followed at a more leisurely pace; Oswald having meanwhile absented himself on some unexplained business of his own.

Sir Rawlin set out with an unacknowledged feeling at his heart that things to-day were going at once right and wrong with him. The friendly and old-world homeliness of the household at Cliff's End, which had made him so soon a partner in all its intimate humours, was filling him with a genial warmth to which he had been long a stranger; and to this result the charm of the girl at his side contributed. The very fact that it did so, however, troubled him with new misgivings, when he found himself committed to a situation so unexpectedly favourable to its influence. It was all very well to tell himself that this girl was a child; but everything distinctive of womanhood, which has ever troubled man or itself, seemed latent now in her eyes, in the disturbing delicacy of her intonations, and in the footsteps accompanying his own with such a docile and gay fidelity. He was, nevertheless, tempted to reflect presently that this maturity, despite its dangers, was in some measure its own safeguard.

He began, by way of keeping to safe topics, with asking her if she knew what had happened to the absent Oswald.

"Yes," she said, laughing, "I know, though he hasn't told me. He's gone to revisit a spot where he fell in love yesterday afternoon with a beautiful being whom he encountered when he walked with me up to Miss Aldritch's. She was coming out of the gardens of your crescent, looking as if the world belonged to her; and I must say, for Oswald's credit, that she stared at *him* as if he belonged to her too. It's so easy to see through boys. Ever since then he's

felt that he has made a conquest. By this time he's watching the gate, and I dare say composing a poem about her—about unkissed kisses, and 'broken' and 'unspoken,' and all the rest of it."

A young lady, he felt, who could talk about matters in this fashion was not devoid of qualities which would make her her own protectress.

The nearest way to the golf-course was by the path which a week ago Miss Vivian had traversed with Mr. Barton, and which ran by the grove of firs under which she had sketched that morning; but farther on, where it mounted some rising ground, it was seen to skirt so closely the brink of an appalling precipice, over which Mr. Hugo and Miss Elvira now appeared to be hanging, that Miss Vivian entreated her companion to take her by the shore instead.

Sir Rawlin assented with some secret reluctance. "Yes," he said, "if you like it, I'm sure that your plan is possible. Indeed, I can just remember being taken that way when a boy. There used, somewhere at the end, to be an odd old haunted house." A haunted house would be a topic even safer than Oswald's kisses.

They descended to the shore accordingly, and, much to Sir Rawlin's satisfaction, yet another safe topic was started by the girl herself—namely, the technique of painting in water-colours. What indiscretion could lurk in discussions as to lakes and carmines, cobalts and flake whites, and their several relations to the magic of seas and hills and sunsets? And yet even pigments and their uses were not without some human interest; for Sir Rawlin, having touched on the methods by which various effects were producible, was naturally questioned about the purposes to which he had himself applied them; and just as naturally his answers, deserting paints and paint-boxes, grew into descriptions of the scenes he had tried to capture—Eastern evenings descending over plains where tents and camels shared the solitude with the mounds of Mesopotamian cities; primitive water-wheels whose pitchers might have ministered to the flocks of Abraham; apparitions of appalling palaces lost in forgotten deserts, and castles of crusading Counts at whose portals were stone lions, and whose halls and fountained courts the boldest sheikh of the Haurân had never dared to enter, deeming them the abode of demons.

A walk of half a mile, beguiled by descriptions such as these, brought them from the beach to a cart-track which, issuing from a disused quarry, hugged the base of the cliffs, and to which they were obliged to betake themselves. Following this, and presently turning a corner, they were confronted by a curious spectacle. To Miss Vivian it was new and startling. It came back to Sir Rawlin as a vision half remembered. Before them was a sequestered creek, which was bordered on the farther side, not by cliffs, but by a

gradual and wooded slope; and at the bottom of this, and almost touched by the sea, was an isolated and extensive habitation of a laughably fantastic character. It consisted of a circular structure surmounted by grotesque battlements, pierced with horse-shoe windows, spiked with stucco minarets, and flanked by two long annexes of the same style as the centre. In front of it was a terrace with walls, the bases of which were green with sea-weed, and which alone, to all appearance, saved the whole from being washed away.

"Ah," said Sir Rawlin, "there it is! That's the old haunted house. It used, I think, to be called the Turkish Castle. It was built by an Anglo-Indian who, for some reason, never lived in it. We used to be told that it was full of mirrors and gorgeous gilding; but sightseers were never admitted, and I'm sure we can neither of us wonder that it never had found a tenant."

At the point where they were now standing the cart-track began to rise, and a smaller track branched off from it, running down to a stunted pier, from which the stone of the quarry had been formerly transferred to lighters. A little way up the ascent the two spectators paused, and, leaning together on the bar of a broken fence, they contemplated the castle again, whose details were now more distinguishable.

"Look at it," said Sir Rawlin. "Not another house in sight. One might be at the end of the world here, instead of in the heart of Southquay. The interior, we used to be told, was always kept in repair, though no one was allowed to enter it. I dare say it is so still, though the garden on the terrace in front is nothing more than a wilderness."

Here he was checked by the girl, who suddenly seized his arm, and drawing herself close to him, whispered with a slight shudder—

"Hush! Do you see that—just down below us, on the pier?"

At the end of the pier, within reach of a child's stonethrow, was a man, solitary and motionless, who, like themselves, had his eyes fixed on the castle. He was looking at it through a pair of opera-glasses. His figure, tall and striking, was shrouded in a long blue cloak, and in the easy erectness of his bearing there was a suggestion of military command.

"What can he be up to?" said Miss Vivian in Sir Rawlin's ear. "He's got his watch out, as though he were timing something. I call this most uncanny."

They continued to observe in silence, till Sir Rawlin, in a whisper like her own, called her attention to an object on the parapet of the sea-wall opposite.

"At first," he said, "I thought it was a man, but it isn't; it's a kind of scarecrow. And now—good heavens! what's this? Is this a ghost or a woman?"

Whilst he was speaking, a figure, seemingly female, had emerged from some portion of the desolate pile of buildings, and rapidly flitting towards the object which Sir Rawlin had called the scarecrow, administered a violent, and apparently murderous, push to it, sending it headlong into the water, on which it remained floating. Then the moving apparition hurriedly retraced its steps, and was lost to sight behind a turret in which the sea-wall terminated. At the same time the cloaked watcher put his opera-glasses into his pocket, and turned round to quit the pier.

Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian could now see his face. It was one, as they both felt, which it would not be easy to forget. Clean-shaven, except for a slight moustache, it might have been the face of an ambassador, a foreign general, or even an aristocratic conspirator. It was certainly un-English, and the quiet and possessive confidence with which the man surveyed the scene, invested him with an air which Englishmen regard as insolent, when any one but an Englishman exhibits it out of his own country.

"If we walk on slowly," said Sir Rawlin, "he will presently catch us up, and then we can see him better."

This expectation was not, however, verified by events. The man, seemingly lost in his own thoughts, and wearing a slight smile, picked his way down the sloping side of the pier, by which, as they now perceived, a small boat was rocking; and presently with vigorous strokes he was pulling himself towards the building opposite. The last they saw of him was that, close to the sea-wall, he was drawing the floating figure into his little craft with a boat-hook.

Full of speculation as to the meaning of these mysterious proceedings, and the possible character of their no less mysterious hero, Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian made their way to the golf-ground, where, in taking a short route to the club-house, they only just, by instinctive and mutual consent, contrived to avoid attracting the observation of Colonel O'Brian. The Colonel, in monumental stockings, the pattern of which would have been legible at a distance of five hundred yards, was luckily occupied with a black-eyed and sallow-faced companion, whom he was, with considerable gusto, addressing by the title of Count.

"What an escape!" said Miss Vivian, as they sheltered themselves behind a ridge of hillocks. "I hope I may never be submitted to a second course of his fascinations. We can't stop long. If he sees us with Elvira we are done for. Where is she? And where is Mr. Hugo? Let us find them at once and be off. Ah, she is there. She sees us. She is standing at the door of the club-house."

"It's all right. The Pater has got us in." Such was Miss Elvira's greeting, when the two others approached her. "The Pater would have stopped—for we told him that you were coming—if he hadn't

been hurried away to play a twosome with Count Giordano. Mr. Hugo and I are going to begin next week; and now, Mr. Hugo says, let's go home to schoolroom tea."

Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian were delighted to get out of the Colonel's range; and the whole party returned to Cliff's End together.

The following day was Sunday; and now once more Sir Rawlin, when he said good-bye to his friends, discovered the power of circumstances to bring about the unintended.

"I don't know," said Lady Susannah, "what church you may go to; but perhaps, if you go to All Saints, we may see you after one of the services."

Miss Vivian was watching him as he answered, "I shouldn't," he said, "wonder if you found me there."

But not even yet were the incidents of the day over for him. The unintended met him again, when he entered the crescent gardens, on his way back to his hotel. It was now twilight, but the twilight was still luminous; and where two walks met he encountered a noticeable lady, the finished arrogance of whose bearing even the twilight could not obscure. He glanced at her with some curiosity, thoughts of Oswald recurring to him; and he became aware, as he did so, not only of a handsome face, but of a face which, after a moment's scrutiny of him, became enlivened with a half-seen smile.

"And so," said the lady, "it's you! You're a very uncivil man. Perhaps it hasn't occurred to you that I've been here for two whole days, dying for some one to talk to, and you haven't been once to see me."

"Lady Conway!" exclaimed Sir Rawlin. "Of course I had heard that you were coming. Everybody has heard that. But I had not an idea that you had arrived."

"Then I know more about you," she said, "than you know about me. I know where you lunched to-day. I might have known, had I wished to do so, exactly what you had for luncheon, and I've discovered a new cousin who, when I last saw him, was in pinafores. Oswald was very rightly of opinion that a cat may look at a queen—he'll go far, will Oswald—and so I saw no reason why a queen shouldn't talk to a cat. I asked him his name, and I found he was my own flesh and blood—a third cousin, only two or three times removed. 'Oswald,' I said to him, when the terrible parting came, 'if we weren't within the prohibited degrees, I really think I should kiss you.' And now, my dear man, this evening I'm all alone. Shall I eat my heart out by myself, or will you eat a mutton-chop in my company, and tell me about the pretty young lady, whose education you appear to have undertaken? She, I should gather, is likely to go as far as Oswald."

Lady Conway was the Marchioness whose brilliant and superlative patronage was to glorify the coming fête, and also Sir Rawlin's first public introduction to the constituency.

CHAPTER II

The appearance of Lady Conway on the scene had been far from welcome to Sir Rawlin. It dragged him back into a world from which he had been just escaping. When, therefore, on Sunday morning he betook himself to Mr. Barton's church through quiet fields, only agitated by the sounds of far-off bells, he had pleasure in feeling that he was on his way to a refuge where this keen-eyed critic would not be watching his actions. The unusual beauty of the building, the magnificence of the organ, the lifting power of the music, at first surrounded him with an atmosphere in which present things were forgotten; and the middle of the service had been reached before he became aware of a figure, delicate and white as a snowdrop, amongst the darkness of the neighbouring worshippers. A hymn was in progress, and Miss Vivian was standing. Her eyes were contemplating her book; but presently, for no obvious reason, she raised them, looked across the white fur of her boa, and encountered Sir Rawlin's glance with an answering glance of recognition which lasted just long enough to emphasize its abrupt withdrawal.

After service he accompanied Lady Susannah's party, including the two boys, who half enjoyed church as a foil to their own enlightenment, back to Cliff's End across the sloping fields and orchards. In the course of conversation, it transpired that Mr. Hugo and Miss Elvira proposed to start again for the golf-course next morning at half-past eleven; and before Sir Rawlin knew what his lips had spoken, he had said to Miss Vivian—

"And shall you and I go there too, as an excuse for another investigation of the enchanted castle by the way?"

The assent given by the eyes of the young lady in white was ratified by her aunt, who proceeded to express a hope that Sir Rawlin would share their luncheon. "Nest," she said, "wants to show you her sketches. I dare say if you saw some more of them you could tell her where she goes wrong."

"Aunt Susannah," said Miss Vivian, "please spare my blushes. I should never have ventured to make that suggestion myself; but now that the ice is broken, I'll go on to another, which is that Sir Rawlin would some day allow us to see his own."

Sir Rawlin expressed a readiness to bring them his portfolio for their inspection; but declared that he must lunch at home, where a mass of correspondence claimed him. Thus did one thing lead on to another. The following morning came; and, true to his appointment, he was at Cliff's End once more.

Mr. Hugo and Miss Elvira again went by the hill, Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian by the shore; and the latter, before long, found themselves for a second time scanning the building which had roused in them so strong a curiosity. There it was, fantastic and forlorn, as they remembered it; but its aspect had undergone a change, as though a cloud had been partly lifted from it. Of its many blinds, some had been drawn up. Of the windows, some were open; and from some of the chimneys wreaths of smoke were rising. They realized also, as they had not done before, that the public road into which the cart-track brought them led to the castle gates, these being not far off; and the spirit of adventure prompted them to approach the red stone gateposts, and get what view they might of the strange precinct within. The rusty gates were open, and the portals of the mansion itself, surmounted by arabesques in stucco, were some fifty yards away. There were wheel-marks on the gravel, but the rough grass was uncared for, and the only other vegetation consisted of clumps of rosemary. Half ashamed of seeming to stand there like a pair of intruding tourists, they had become, nevertheless, so absorbed in the scene before them that presently they were startled by finding a man confronting them, without their having noticed his approach, or being able to conjecture whence he came. Though he was not the solitary of the pier, he too, like that personage, was enveloped in a long cloak; but his general aspect was otherwise widely different. His cloak itself differed from that of the solitary in the bold self-confidence of the patterning which striped its soft brown substance; and thrown back as it was with a somewhat rakish air, it revealed a satin scarf on whose gloss was a huge pearl, set in such a manner as to mimic a human skull. His boots were perfection, his checked trousers were creaseless; and a hand which the cloak left visible bore a noticeable turquoise ring. The man was none other than Sir Rawlin's friend, the traveller.

Sir Rawlin, whether he blushed or no, had a passing suspicion that he must be doing so.

"What!" he exclaimed, "and so it's you, is it, who are lord of the enchanted castle? This young lady and I were on our way to the golf-course, when the fatal passion of curiosity tempted us from the right path. You know who she is, already. I must tell her that you're Lord Cotswold."

Miss Vivian recognized the name. She remembered, with a faint smile, the discussion of it at her aunt's table. Lord Cotswold

raised his hat—a sort of melodrama in felt—with an air of delightful deference.

"My dear," he said kindly, "do you see this deserted garden? You are probably the first flower that has blossomed in it for sixty years. The enchantments of my castle, like its antiquity, I fear, are skin-deep only. If Miss Vivian and Miss Vivian's family—I must have known some of her relations once—would not be afraid of any malign influences in it, I hope I may be allowed to exhibit it to them when its rooms are in better order. At present it is a monastery inhabited by two monks. We are waiting to break our vows till the housemaids have swept and garnished us."

The girl looked at him with an expression which failed to have some spice of coquetry, only because it was adapted so perfectly to the natural claims of Lord Cotswold's age and dignity.

"Nothing will persuade me," she said, "that you haven't a ghost to enliven you. I saw it myself in broad daylight on Saturday. Your brother monk—at least, I suppose it was he—was watching it, like a prudent man, from the other side of the water."

"Ah, young lady," said Lord Cotswold, "you saw that experiment, did you? My brother monk is repeating it in the house now, and I have to go in and watch it before it's over. I'm coming, by the way, my dear Rawlin, to hear your opening speech, and I hope this first flower of my garden will ornament your audience also. She must, therefore," he went on, "if I unwillingly say good-bye to her, allow me to mean by it that I am trusting to see her very soon again. I leave you, my dear, in the care of one of my most valued friends."

"That's the man," said Sir Rawlin, as they turned away, "to whom in a sense I owe everything. Lord Cotswold was my chief in Persia. Some people call him a charlatan. They don't mean that he hasn't a keen eye for realities. They mean that he takes for realities what other people call visions. What for them are brick walls are for him battlements over which he leans and watches."

The girl hung on his words, fascinated by what to her were merely their vague suggestions.

"I don't know," he went on, "what your aunt will think when she hears that you have made his acquaintance. When we get back, we must grasp our nettle and tell her. Meanwhile I have guessed who his brother monk is. He is either the devil, or else he is Dr. Thistlewood, with whom Lord Cotswold has just been round the world."

"A doctor," said Miss Vivian, in a tone of disappointed doubt. "But what makes you think him a doctor? He's like none of the many doctors who have had to do with me. One could fancy him giving orders to soldiers, but not to people in bed."

"If he is really Dr. Thistlewood," said Sir Rawlin, "he has given orders to both. When little more than a boy, he was one of Garibaldi's officers; and years later, when the cholera was raging at Naples, he turned a house of his own there—a great palace—into a hospital, and lived amongst the dead and dying. He was celebrated everywhere as a hero—he and the King of Italy. If that man is Dr. Thistlewood, I should very much like to meet him."

"Oh, well," said Miss Vivian, "this sounds much more promising. By the way, it's lucky that we shan't meet Colonel O'Brian. Elvira told me that her papa had gone somewhere with his Count Giordano, who looked to me like a cross between a Jew and a Greek. I never in my life saw a more disgusting creature. He actually dared to stare at me."

Lady Susannah, when, by luncheon-time, the party had come safely back to her, would not permit to Sir Rawlin a second evasion of her hospitality; and he, feeling that he must explain to her the meeting of her niece with Lord Cotswold, could not have refused the invitation, even had he wished to do so. Her equable reception of the news at once surprised and relieved him. It appeared that a note had just reached her from Lady Conway, who never having remembered her existence for something like twenty years, was proposing to call on her now, if only she could find time.

"I think," said Lady Susannah, with as near an approach to asperity as good nature permitted in the breast of a Christian woman—"I think if we are to have Maud Conway here, we need hardly be afraid of Lord Cotswold."

In this way everything passed off smoothly, and Sir Rawlin found himself pledged, before he was suffered to depart, to show them next day at tea-time his collection of Oriental sketches.

He proved himself a man of his word. The portfolio by the time named had preceded its owner in a cab, and been carried into the schoolroom, where a large table had been cleared for it. Another table, as before, was laden with a substantial tea; and Miss Vivian and her three cousins, together with the cat Peter and the smiling dachshund James, were awaiting the advent of the artist, who was understood to be walking. Mr. Hugo, pleasantly hungry, peeped under the cover of the muffin-dish. Oswald, loftily conscious of a new and hopeless passion, and also of a passion on Lady Conway's part, equally hopeless, which responded to it—conscious also that, an object of dark interest to others, he would soon be breathing his sorrow to the Propontic and Hellespontic waves—was in better spirits than he ever had been in before; whilst Miss Vivian disguised her expectancy by watching the dog James as she baffled him in his meek attempts at biting her pointed shoe.

"Nest," said Mr. Hugo, indicating a sealed medicine-bottle, which stood on a shelf in front of some battered school books, "the process has begun already. In three weeks' time that bottle will be full of life."

"Mr. Hugo," said Miss Vivian, not troubling to look up at him, "when you talk like that you're a goose. No, you're not—you're a gosling."

"So you say," retorted Mr. Hugo, rather feebly. "I suppose you think," he proceeded, being better at exposition than repartee, "that you yourself are a sort of special creation. You're no more a special creation than that cucumber which you ate at luncheon. If ever I have any children, I shall grow their heads, like cucumbers, in glasses of different shapes. One of these will be like the head of Darwin, another like the head of the lowest type of Hottentot, and the characters of the children—for their heads are at first quite soft—will be just what I have chosen to make them. You, Nest, are merely a house built out of little bricks of plasm; and you're a chapel or a dressmaker's shop, and not a villa or a brewery, simply because the bricks have been laid in a certain way."

In this bold restatement of the scientific gospel, he was interrupted by the entrance of his aunt, with Sir Rawlin and Mr. Carlton following her.

"My dear fellow," Mr. Carlton was saying, "your drawings will be indeed a treat. I've been always so much interested in the East—all palms and Rajahs—so much nicer than Belgravia. I know nothing of it personally but just the little bit of India—so stiff and official—which I saw with the Prince and Princess. Well, my dears," he went on, addressing the others, "here you see me back again. How those trains from Cornwall crawl! Susie, dear creature, as the maids say, I'm literally dropping for my tea."

Tea was dispensed accordingly, and afterwards, when the portfolio was opened—"Now, Nest," said Mr. Carlton, "sit by Sir Rawlin on the sofa, for this is all in your honour, and you can hand us the pictures when you've done with them."

So the exhibition proceeded. The sketches were explained and circulated; but, as the competition for them increased, Miss Vivian rose from her seat, and retired to the window with several of them which she studied with deep attention, casting now and again a hasty glance at the artist.

Matters were in this position, the room being a general litter of water-colours, teacups and plates, and Oswald of the Byronic eyes happened to be indulging on his knees in some furtive performances with the cat, when Lady Susannah, who had hurriedly been called away, reappeared in the doorway with somebody else talking to her.

"My dear," this somebody was saying in a voice of incisive

suavity, "don't be like the farmers' wives, and imprison me in the best parlour. So this is the schoolroom, is it? Delightful! I don't wonder it's popular."

The voice was still speaking when Lady Susannah, a little discomposed, uttered to the general assembly the words, "Here is Lady Conway."

A certain commotion was caused by this lady's entry. "Ah," she said, "I see two friends already—Sir Rawlin and George Carlton. Susannah, you have quite a salon. And now, where are my cousins? Are you one?" she said to Miss Arundel. "Well, my dear, how are you? And you," she went on, turning Mr. Hugo round—"you, I suppose, are Science. Your brother, whom I know, is Poetry; and that young lady in the window, with the drawings in her hands, is Art. Her devotion to it appears extraordinary. I must go over and tell her how pretty I think her frock is."

Lady Conway seemed to have been making everything in the room her own, until she approached Miss Vivian, when her manner slightly changed. She looked the girl up and down. She looked her inquiringly in the eyes.

"If I'd known before that you were here," she said, "I'd have taken you to this ball myself. However," she added, with a smile in the direction of Mr. Carlton, "I gather that you'll be under the care of a much older woman than I am. And are those your own drawings that you're looking at with such flattering interest?"

"No," said Miss Vivian, "they are some of Sir Rawlin Stantor's. He's been showing my aunt and all of us the things he did in the East."

Lady Conway's only verbal reply was short; but she looked at the girl again with a sort of comprehending sympathy, which seemed to have a trace of pity in it.

"Ah, my dear Oswald," she went on, "from what hole have you sprung from? Have you only just appeared, or have you been trying to cut me?"

Oswald by this time had drifted quietly near her, the lover in him having by this time recovered itself from his unfortunate familiarities with the cat. Lady Conway gave him her hand, and, as he held it in speaking silence, she glanced for an instant at Miss Vivian, her eyes alight with laughter. To this Miss Vivian responded with an intelligence equal to Lady Conway's. She might have been one woman looking at another of similar years and experience. Her manner, however, of regarding this new acquaintance presently became more critical. Lady Conway, having proceeded to make a very substantial tea, and having examined with an air of authority several of Sir Rawlin's drawings, approached the artist, and laying a careless hand on his shoulder said to him—

"Look here, are you listening? Before this ball—the day after to-morrow, isn't it?—if it doesn't begin at tea-time, you had better come and dine again with me. Indeed, if you're not a fixture here, you might walk home with me now."

Miss Vivian caught the words, and noticed the action which accompanied them. Before long it was evident that Lady Conway was going. Sir Rawlin rose, as though he must be going also, and making his way towards the window—

"Will you," he said to the girl, "put the pictures together, and take care of them for me, and give them to me when I come again?"

She was still examining one of them, over which she now bent more closely.

"Yes, yes," she answered without looking up. "I had wanted to ask you about some of them. But—well, my questions must wait. You are walking back with that woman, aren't you? From something you said yesterday, I suppose we shan't meet before the ball. If she doesn't take up all your time, I dare say we may meet there. My dress will be black and white—white, with black velvet bows. That will help you to remember me. Thank you for showing us the pictures; and so—good-bye till then."

She snatched her hand away from him, rose, and turning to the window looked out into the gathering twilight, while he went through his other leave-takings.

CHAPTER III

Sir Rawlin, for the next two days, was again engaged in business, and, except in his character of a candidate, neither called on nor saw any one until, on the night of the ball, he presented himself for dinner at Lady Conway's.

"I wonder," she began, when the meal was drawing to its conclusion, and the servants had left the room—"come, if you won't drink, smoke—I wonder who that girl's parents are."

"What girl?" asked Sir Rawlin, as he applied a match to a cigarette.

"I don't think much of you," said Lady Conway, "for asking such a stupid question. The little minx with the smart frock, who is so occupied with you and your water-colours."

"Oh," said Sir Rawlin, "I think I can tell you that. The father is Captain Rhyss Vivian."

"To be sure," said Lady Conway, interrupting him. "He's the man who was said by his friends to suffer from a peculiar madness—a kind of kleptomania which only developed itself at the card-table. Anyhow, he committed that one sin for which there is no forgiveness in this world or the next. It's odd that commentators on the Bible should have never discovered what it is. I saw him when I was a girl—the admired of all admirers. Full of good nature, they said he was. He left England, and married some Belgian Countess—the heiress of a great chocolate-maker. At least he did so as soon as the inevitable husband died. For the sake of his *beaux yeux* she, of course, thought him a martyr."

"Well," said Sir Rawlin, glad to continue on safe ground, "the father, you say, was good-natured. He must certainly be so to his daughter. This young lady has money. She can order whatever she likes. But it seems she's been very ill from the after-effects of influenza, and is here to get back her strength. I fancy, however, that this is only part of the story. There's a half-sister, it seems, who goes by a different name—so, at least, I gather from Lady Susannah—and for some reason or other they don't get on together. If this one goes back to her parents, the other is to come here

instead of her. My own impression is that this one must be illegitimate."

"Precisely," said Lady Conway. "My dear man, you're quite astute. One is the daughter of the bondwoman, the other of the free; one of the mother as a wife, the other of the mother as a mistress; and Miss Isaac, depend upon it, makes home too hot for Miss Ishmael. Or else, perhaps, this little illegitimate person can't bear being reminded that her mother was not always quite so good as she might have been; and yet she, I suspect, has something of mamma's blood in her veins, to judge by the impertinence of her frocks, and by her very-much-too-pretty eyes. But what strikes me as so funny—I'm thinking of poor Susannah. Yes, yes, to be sure—I begin to see light now."

"What," said Sir Rawlin, "are you laughing at?"

"You will," replied Lady Conway, "hardly believe me if I tell you. You see what Susannah is now. She was never much better-looking. But Fate finds out all of us; and Susannah—it was a family legend—had her own romance like the rest of us. This dazzling warrior was the hero of it. She must have two thousand a year, so it's quite possible that he encouraged her; and now, poor dear, she at last finds she can be of use to him. Oswald told me a thing or two; but I don't think he knew much; and his memory has temporarily failed him for everything except myself."

"Yes," said Sir Rawlin, reflectively, "boys are curious creatures. Their first loves are always women——"

"Finish your sentence," said Lady Conway. "Women old enough to be their great-great-grandmothers. Well, there's hope for us all. Men, in their own way, are creatures just as curious. My dear man," she continued, "I was on the point of preaching you a sermon; but I won't. Just wait a little, and I'll show you that I can do better. At what hour does this brilliant function begin? At ten, do you say? Then we'd better ring for coffee."

The rooms in which the ball was given opened from a circular hall, where members of the committee were signalizing themselves by welcoming the more important guests. Lady Conway, the moment she emerged from the cloak-room, was beset by official gentlemen, ornamented with pink rosettes. Then the official gentlemen were reinforced by some official ladies, foremost amongst whom was Mrs. Morriston Campbell.

"It's so good of you to come," the official ladies murmured—an assertion which Lady Conway delighted them by contradicting flatly.

"I expect," said Mrs. Morriston Campbell, oozing with abashed importance, "you'll find many people here you know. I saw Lady Grange only two minutes ago."

"Where?" said Lady Conway in alarm; and then turning round to Sir Rawlin, "Help me," she whispered, "to escape from that most horrible of all old hags. But, wait a minute." Her eyes meanwhile had strayed, and, moving forwards, she captured a young man in a snowy waistcoat, who was patiently parading a sense of superiority to the general company. "Captain Vansittart," she said, "I want to have one word with you. I've a girl coming here to-night whom I'm anxious to see enjoying herself. I want you to dance with her, and get her some decent partners—young and beautiful as yourself, if you think such a thing is possible. You won't regret it. Come to me by-and-by in the ballroom."

Captain Vansittart, on seeing her, was like a dead man coming to life again, and she left him proclaiming by his carriage that he had not been born in vain.

"And now," she said to Sir Rawlin, "what shall we dowagers do with ourselves? I'll tell you what *you* should do. Don't be tied to my apron-strings, but go and make yourself agreeable to every antiquated object, male or female, that you can put a name to. Ah, here comes Oswald. Sir Rawlin, your country calls you. Oswald, my dear boy, take me into the ballroom, and tell me who some of these odd specimens are. Where," she went on, as they ensconced themselves in a bower of palm trees—"where is that pretty little cousin of yours?"

"There she goes," said Oswald. "We did the best we could for her. Her partner has just left Eton—the son of a decent parson here."

Lady Conway followed with her eyes a vision in black and white, whose movements were as exquisite as its millinery, and reduced the partner of its progress to a hardly distinguishable accessory.

"Isn't my little charge quite too distracting and captivating?" said a voice in her ear, as Mr. George Carlton seated himself.

"You must bring her to me," said Lady Conway, "when this performance is finished. We'll do better for her presently."

"I see some one," said Mr. Carlton, "from whom we must protect her at any price—a Colonel Brian or O'Brian, or something. He has a daughter who's a friend of hers; and poor dear Susie, if you please, who never knew anything of the world, actually asked him to luncheon. Just watch him. He's as good as a play—all moustaches and perspiration. Don't speak loud. He's over there, quite close to us, and some brother monster along with him."

The Colonel, aggressively conscious of his shirt and a large flower in his button-hole, was addressing his companion in audible and highly vivacious tones.

"You don't think much of our English young ladies—eh, Count? What do you think of *her*—my young friend, who has just gone by?"

"You know her—what?" exclaimed the other, with a light in his protruding eyes. "Ah, what a waist and shoulders! She's just like—how do you call it?—a best girl of my own somewhere. What's her name? Vivian? Ah, not a name I know. And yet, if she weren't so haughty, I tell you she'd be just *my* style. If you really know her, *mon Colonel*, introduce me. Merely because I am curious, I should just like to hear her talk."

"Really know her!" said the Colonel. "Wait a bit till you see me whisking her round the room."

"Oswald," said Lady Conway, "do you see that tall Adonis, who seems to be chewing the cud of his own past successes? It's Captain Vansittart. Tell him I want to speak to him; and bring your cousin to me the moment this dance is ended. I'm determined, George, that that child shall have the sort of evening she ought to have. You don't mean to say that Susie lets her talk to a man like that?"

Mr. Carlton shrugged his shoulders. "By the way," he said, "I saw in the hall our distinguished member as is to be, quite surrounded by a posse of local bigwigs. What a handsome fellow that is!"

"Yes," said Lady Conway, "he's as handsome as a man can be without looking a fool like Captain Vansittart; and he's not a fool at this moment, for he's following my own advice to him."

Sir Rawlin, indeed, had not only followed her advice, but the moment he saw her address herself to Captain Vansittart he had grasped her immediate attentions, and had ceased to have any doubts as to her meaning. He resented such interference as coming from a woman like her; but the fact that even to her it seemed necessary roused his own scruples into life again. He had seen the back of the girl's head in the distance, and adjacent to it Mr. Carlton's wig. He had turned sharply away. "At all events her evening," he thought, "shall not be disturbed by *me*."

The resolution thus formed he carried out so consistently that till long past midnight he did not even enter the ballroom. Fate, however, was a creditor which exacted its dues at last. The wife of the high sheriff, a buxom and lively lady, made it impossible for him, he being a good though an unwilling dancer, not to do by her what she obviously considered to be his duty; and the two accordingly added themselves to the medley of revolving couples. As white shoulders and black, as trousers and skirts went by them, she had no time to notice that he had suddenly grown grave and absent. At last he was aware of the figure which he had thus far been so scrupulously avoiding. Their eyes met for a moment. Lady Conway's wisdom had faded into irrelevant and officious folly.

The dance ended; and with a dexterity perhaps somewhat too

pronounced, he deposited his lady somewhere—he was not very sure where, except that it was near a recess like a magnified bow-window, at the aperture of which, leaning against a tall red curtain, Miss Vivian stood with Captain Vansittart close to her. The young man, who had the air of completing a conquest which was at least begun, was practising attitudes indicative of a tender monopoly. "I'm awfully sorry," he was saying to her, "that I've got to be off to-morrow," and was hastening to add, "But I hope we shall meet in London," when, in the middle of this avowal, he was conscious that her attention wandered. Her eyes lit up. She moved. She evidently had forgotten his existence.

"I thought," she said, advancing to meet Sir Rawlin, "I thought that you were never coming. Here's a seat; or where will that passage take us? I believe I feel rather tired. Let us see if we can't rest in there."

The passage, as she called it, had originally been an open arcade, running along the façade of the building between two protruding wings; but now it was glazed in and formed a kind of corridor. At the end of it were two glass doors. Sir Rawlin pushed them open; and he and his companion found themselves in a large space, where bands had at one time played in the open air; but this, too, like the arcade, had now been enclosed by glass, and been turned into a winter garden. The middle was at present occupied by a number of long rough tables, evidently prepared for a flower-show. Some chairs had been arranged for such persons as might choose to use them, but nothing else had been done to attract the company of to-night. No lamps had been lighted, and the only artificial illumination came through rose-coloured curtains from the shining ballroom within. But the lamps were not missed. The whole place was white with moonlight, and the open sea was visible, flickering through the transparent walls. The whole structure might have been a glass ship afloat on the silvered waters.

Here at length they seated themselves. Sir Rawlin watched her in silence; and, softened by the intervening windows, the air from Carmen came to them, "Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi." The ivory whiteness of her dress, emphasized at the waist and shoulders by clear-cut bands of blackness, the blackness of her long gloves, and the violets dreaming at her breast, gave her the air of a pre-naturally young widow, whose vigil was at the gates of the future rather than at the grave of the past. He tried to speak, but his first attempt was a failure. Then in words, the most commonplace he was able to muster, he asked her once more how she had enjoyed her evening.

"I'm looking at the sea," she answered. "I enjoy the sea much better. That same sea glitters in the Persian Gulf. The

Nile and the Ganges and the Euphrates all go flowing into it. Yes, I liked the dancing, as I told you. But what does dancing come to? It makes one want the depths, and gives one only the shallows. And you have seen it all—all those far-off places, and the ships with the odd sails, and the minarets, and the men with turbans. I don't want to talk. Stay by me, and let me just be silent."

She leaned her chin on one of her slim black hands, and again looked out over the water, lost in her own reflections. Sir Rawlin was lost in reflections of his own likewise. Memories of Lady Conway's unspoken sermon came back to him. He thought, too, of Lord Cotswold's words, "A child like that is never a child." He grew more and more conscious that, however unwelcome in some ways, the presence of a chaperon would in others be very desirable. In default of a chaperon he brought out a cigarette. A moment later he felt he had been wise in doing so. The doors had been pushed open, and some one or other had entered; but with the aid of his cigarette he managed to be so elaborately natural that he did not even turn to see who or what the intruder was, and Miss Vivian's indifference was apparently even more absolute. Sir Rawlin, indeed, was affecting to be occupied with the course of a moonlit smoke-ring when he heard a voice saying to him—

"Well, I call this true seclusion. Your discovery of it is the success of the evening."

Sir Rawlin looked up, and before him was Lady Conway, with a flash in her eyes, half humorous, half upbraiding.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," she went on, "but all things must have an end, even seclusion; and this young lady—I speak for her Cousin George—must exchange the quiet of a ball for the comparative dissipation of bed. My dear," she said, turning to the girl, "your carriage has been called already, and precious Cousin George will be in hysterics if he's kept waiting."

Miss Vivian, however, still comported herself as if she had heard nothing; and Lady Conway, unaccustomed to such behaviour, stooped and looked curiously into her face. It was the face of one who was either asleep with her eyes open, or who else, so it seemed to Lady Conway, must have fainted in that condition. Lady Conway knew, for her knowledge in this way was extensive, that women, and especially girls with little experience, do occasionally faint under the onslaughts of male attention; and her own conception of love-making being very far from transcendental, she leapt to the conclusion that Sir Rawlin, by some crude or premature liberty, had succeeded in giving a violent shock to one who had, to say the least of it, a claim on his discreet forbearance. She contemplated the girl with an expression that gradually became almost tender. At last she stooped

again, and lightly kissed her forehead. Then turning to Sir Rawlin, she said in a changed tone—

"I hope you are satisfied with your work. What have you been trying to do to her? But I know men. I needn't ask. It will be better for your own character—hers is of no importance—if she's found here with me alone. We may have to call a doctor. What muddlers you men are! You're all of a piece—all of you."

Sir Rawlin was about to answer, when suddenly, with a brusque movement, Miss Vivian turned round to him and said—

"Am I very absent?"

"I'm afraid you are, my dear," said Lady Conway's voice behind her, "and I've come to tell you that Cousin George is particularly anxious that you should be present. You, Sir Rawlin, quick, go and find Mr. Carlton, and tell him that his young lady's caught and will be out in another minute. You may thank your stars," she added, following him for a few paces, "that nothing worse has come of this. Don't dawdle about and make any scene at parting, but drive back by yourself and wait for me on my own doorstep. I've some nice little things to say to you."

Not very long afterwards the echoes of Sir Rawlin's crescent were roused by the rumble of a carriage, and Lady Conway was saying to her footman, "Bring some whisky and a siphon into the dining-room, and wait up for ten minutes to let Sir Rawlin Stantor out. You see," she continued, when the dining-room door was closed, "how careful I am of that treasure, my own good name. Frederick's virginal eyes shall be satisfied that you're off the premises. And now let me tell you—— But come, don't stand. Sit down. Let me tell you—— "

Sir Rawlin, however, interrupted her. "Before you tell me," he said, "any single thing of any kind, let me tell you something first."

"Very well," she said; "tell away, then."

"I know," said Sir Rawlin, looking her quietly in the face, "what you assume my conduct to have been. I won't quarrel with you for your assumptions. I will content myself with showing you that they are wrong. Listen: you found me sitting about a yard away from my companion—a safe distance, as you will admit. Since we entered that place and were alone together I had not been an inch, or a fraction of an inch, nearer to her. Also I had uttered to her one single observation only, which was to the effect that I hoped she had enjoyed her evening. The condition in which you found her—I was quite unaware of it myself, and it can but have lasted for a minute or two—naturally makes you suspicious. Let me tell you something of which you cannot possibly be aware. Miss Vivian, ever since a serious illness, has suffered from some disorder of the nerves. I and Lord Cotswold found her some weeks ago sitting with

her cousin, Miss Arundel, on one of the public benches in a state much the same as that in which she was just now. The cause on that occasion was walking too fast uphill. She did not appear to be asleep; but I spoke to her, and she did not recognize me, and a few days afterwards she had no recollection of the incident. If you doubt me you can ask her cousin, her aunt, her doctor. You need therefore——" he went on, but Lady Conway stopped him.

"Come," she said, "I won't ask you for references. Men lie so often, that I know when they don't by contrast. Indeed, I must admit that, when I put my precious burden into her carriage, and saw that she looked disappointed rather than discomposed, I began to wonder whether I might not be less right than I usually am. Have some whisky and soda-water to show that there's no ill-feeling, and also to keep your courage up, for I haven't done with you yet. Indeed, I may tell you candidly that I've only just begun. If Frederick is scandalized we must sacrifice his salvation to yours. And now, how can I manage to make myself most odious?"

Lady Conway seemed to be struggling with conscientious and unwonted pains for the highest foothold available on the Sinai of serious morals. At last she found it in the shape of a great general principle, enunciating it with the modesty of one who is merely laying stress on a truism.

"Married women," began the preacher, "are of course all fair game." Her sermon having been once started, the rest became much easier. "But," she went on trenchantly, "with unmarried girls it's different. Not being a girl myself, I can afford to take strict views for them. In love as in war, hit those of your own size. Now one thing, my dear man, is just as plain as a pikestaff. Girls —even girls with nerves—don't faint for nothing; and, though I'll admit most handsomely that you no more thought of touching her than you would have done had she been the Ark of the Covenant, she would never have been in the state in which she was, if it hadn't been—how shall I put it? To make a long story short—and you ought to know that yourself—she's head over ears in love with you, or she will be, if you don't prevent it. I saw it the other day when she was looking at those drawings of yours. Now this—for you're not, at your age, going to take a bride from the schoolroom—would, if things came to a crisis, put you in an absurd position. I'm speaking of yourself only. I shall say nothing more of her. Don't you, in all sober cynicism, think as much yourself?"

"Yes," said Sir Rawlin, rather grudgingly, "supposing you to be right, I do."

"Boys," said Lady Conway, "can do anything without making themselves ridiculous, just as a child or a cat, without so much as shaking itself, can have a tumble which, if we had it, would make

us cripples for life; and the most ridiculous thing which a mature man like you, so far as regards himself, can do to any woman is to raise expectations in her which he is not prepared to satisfy. We know this from the immortal Joseph; and it's doubly true when the woman in question is a girl. It would indeed be a delightful thing for our distinguished Conservative candidate to add to his other credentials the reputation in Southquay circles of breaking the heart of a chit hardly out of her short frocks, and restoring her to a condition of hysterics from which she had just escaped. Of course I'm exaggerating. The young lady is very much grown up. I don't want to frighten you. I want to prepare you for the consolations of reason. Love, with a girl like this, is very much like a cold. It's easily cured if the cure is applied in time. Now the question is, what's to be the cure in your case? As you can't go away like Æneas—for that's out of the question—whatever you do, don't pull her up short. That would precipitate a crisis, which is just what you want to avoid. See her as much as you please. Take a deeper and deeper interest in her. That, I suppose, is the way in which you would wish me to express myself. But—listen now, for I'm going to confide to you a patent prescription of my own—let the interest be of a kind which will gradually make her think you a bore. For example, she's coming to this fête to-morrow. As soon as your speech is over, take her to all the side-shows. Treat her as if she were an ordinary child. There's one hint; and here is a very much better one. I've just had a letter from my dear old friend, Dr. Thistlewood, telling me that he's here, and has consented to give a lecture at some local scientific institute. Insist on her going to that. Talk to her about it afterwards; and never use a word, if you can help it, of less than thirteen syllables. When you're not treating her as a child, treat her as if you hoped that some day she'd be the mistress of a high school. I doubt if the profoundest passion in the heart of sweet nineteen would survive for many weeks a really high-minded devotion such as that. I find, when I look into your case, that your ways of salvation multiply. And now good night. Frederick shall be tried no longer. The devil's quotations from Scripture must, if necessary, be continued in our next."

CHAPTER IV

THAT same night, as the late train from London was slackening its pace among the outlying hills of Southquay, a man in a second-class carriage was standing bolt upright, in order to spell out a letter by the lamp that burnt above him. He was dressed in black, he was tall, and a cord was round his low-crowned hat. This man was Mr. Barton, released at last from the duties which for the past fortnight had been engrossing him. The letter was from Lady Susannah. It had only reached him that morning, and the larger part of it was taken up with a request that, as he was staying at the house of his Order in Westminster, he would do something or other for her at the Army and Navy Stores. Now, however, on re-reading it, he had perceived for the first time that over the page there was a postscript; and this it was that absorbed him at the present moment. With some difficulty he was spelling out the following words: "You will be glad to hear that Nest, since you went away, has been very much better—enjoying, amusing, and interesting herself just as we wished she should do. We have often seen Sir Rawlin, who has really been very kind, taking her and Hugo to the golf-course. She is going with us all to the Constitutional Fête, to hear him make his opening speech; and to-morrow my cousin, George Carlton, is taking her to the Mid-Lent ball, where he and Lady Conway will be sure to get a few partners for her."

Mr. Barton with a sigh thrust the letter into his pocket. "A ball!" he murmured to himself. "I had never looked forward to that. And this Lady Conway—Lady Conway—what has she to do with the matter?"

The road from Southquay Station to the town runs along a curve of shore; and clusters of house-clad hills, with all their constellated lights, were framed by the window of his closed fly as he peered through it. The lights generally lay sparse on the darkness of the nocturnal gardens, but out on a spur of rock the Bath saloons were blazing, and were sending shining streaks into the glass of the intervening waters. Mr. Barton's own way would take him close to this

group of buildings. The road at that point was steep, and, as his vehicle was slowly labouring up it, he told the driver to drop him, saying that he would follow on foot.

He stood for some minutes motionless on the blanched pavement, and stared at the buildings opposite him, from which snatches of music issued. He was not a man whom his asceticism with regard to himself had ever rendered censorious with regard to the amusements of others. He had, though he had never attended balls personally, been accustomed to accept them as incidents of ordinary social intercourse; but now his solicitude for one particular soul caused him to regard them with a pang of desolating jealousy, as though everything most remote from the welfare of souls were incarnate in them. At last he was roused by the sound of a policeman's tread; and, aching with a vague disquiet, he unwillingly moved away.

When he reached his own house, where he forced himself to eat a mouthful or two, his mind was still in the same state of tension. Restlessly pacing to and fro in his library, he fixed his eyes on the heads of his Italian saints—images of spiritual passion—which were hung by wires against his bookshelves; and the expression of each face, as he contemplated it, seemed to repeat itself in his own. Then, carrying his one light with him, he betook himself to the smaller room into which his library opened, and there, having paused in front of the bare oak table, which, as Sir Rawlin had noticed, was evidently employed as a *prie-dieu,* he sank down, kneeling on the stool which stood before it.

Prayer, as commonly understood, is the proferring of some definite supplication, or, perhaps, some definite act of confession and devout resolve. With men like Mr. Barton it is a prolonged spiritual drama, more real in its opulent adventures than anything that is called reality. Before his eyes at first there was only an unfathomed darkness, but he knew the ways of that night, his inward gaze was patient with it, and gradually in its uncharted depth a something began to flicker. It was vague when it first showed itself, but quickly grew more distinct, till it turned into a face like a cameo, pale against its dark matrix; but it differed from a cameo in exhibiting the texture and the tints of life. Its eyes, as he scanned their depths, seemed to know and to seek him, and to penetrate him with their responding gaze. He saw in them that sorrowful knowledge of all human sorrows with which a remote Omniscience has enriched itself by stooping to man's experience. The longer he looked—and he now lost count of time—the expression of this face grew deeper, as though all these sorrows accumulated were fulfilling themselves at the same moment in a single forlorn heart. Mr. Barton's own heart seemed to him to leap forwards, and to adore

and also to expostulate with the condescension of the Divine Sufferer; and at last the assaults of his love, as his spiritual teachers would have called them, began to work their wonder. They began to produce a transformation in the aspect of the Lord Himself. The agonized face softened into a sort of semi-obscurity. Then it began to reform itself and, as it reformed itself, it was changed. The Christ of history, with His spasm of earthly life, had given place to the Christ that is beyond time, to the Reason eternal by which all the worlds exist, to the eternal and delectable Beauty which is the Bridegroom of the spousal soul. Just as the eyes at first had been the eyes of all sorrows, they were now the eyes of that Love, out-passioning passion, which, for those who directly experience it, will, as all the saints declare, so fill the soul with beatitude that sorrow has no room left for it.

Mr. Barton felt as if his whole being were taking wings, and, like "the little lonely dove," as St. Francis de Sales calls the enraptured spirit, were about to mount to the bosom of the celestial Loveliness. But something held him back, and he heard a voice saying to him, "I am ready for you, Theophilus. What keeps you from me?" Mr. Barton's head sank lower. "Lord," he heard himself answer, "do Thou read my thoughts; or let me speak them to myself on this wise, and Thou shalt hear me. The Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep of all His folds carried one lamb on His shoulders. One disciple was distinguished amongst all the rest as the beloved one. If one of the Master's disciples, a humble shepherd himself, were to come into his Master's presence bearing a lamb likewise—a lamb who might have else been lost—would the Master say to him, 'Depart and come not near me, because thou hast been overheedful of that which is not I'? Lord, even to myself I dare to breathe no more." Having said this, he felt himself transformed into one act of listening, his suspense being that of a man whose neck is beneath the guillotine; and by-and-by it seemed to him that the divine voice answered, "My son, do not fear to look at Me. As thou art present in My heart, so let her be in thine. Bring thy lamb to Me that she may be in My heart also."

CHAPTER V

Mr. Barton was in many ways a very sensible man. However high he might lift himself above the levels of ordinary existence, he felt, when he came down to them, no false shame or difficulty in resuming the moods and judgments proper to life's daily business. Accordingly when he awoke next morning his solicitude with regard to Miss Vivian, although it was undiminished, assumed a more practical character. He recollected that she would in the afternoon be present at the political fête, and he resolved to attend this himself, in the hopes, not merely of meeting her, but also of observing her demeanour—especially, so he caught himself thinking, her demeanour towards Sir Rawlin Stantor.

By three o'clock, the hour at which the fête opened, the Bath Saloons had transfigured themselves. The great ballroom was hung with flags and patriotic mottoes. Here, at half-past three, Sir Rawlin and others were to speak; and then, when the speaking was over, sight-seeing, gaiety, refreshments, and all kinds of music were to give wings to the moments till eleven o'clock at night. In one of the smaller rooms Punch would delight the young. In another a lady mesmerist would mingle mirth with mystery. In another penny portraits would be taken by magnesium light. Flowers and vegetables would be exhibited in the winter-garden.

When the party from Cliff's End arrived and were provided by a steward with chairs in the front row, the speakers were already on the platform, flanked or backed by rows of influential or ornamental personages. Amongst these Lady Conway in sables held a foremost place, her face calm with a sort of disdainful assurance, which made the failure of any cause associated with herself seem incredible; and Sir Rawlin, piqued by a memory of her late admonitions, and determined to put her in her place by exhibiting his full value, spoke, when his own time came, with an eloquence so incisive and masterly that his last words were lost in a volume of resounding cheers.

"Yours," Lady Conway said to him, when the oratorical performance was over, "was a capital speech—a magnificent speech, I hope you've not forgotten mine. Wait for a moment, and I'll

deliver it over again to you. There is Miss Nest. Come here, my dear. Where did you get that hat? Let me look at you. You've quite recovered, I see. Well, I took you away last night from a very great deal of wisdom; and now Sir Rawlin has been giving you such a large additional dose of it that you haven't—he's afraid, and so am I—taken in more than half. He's particularly anxious to explain to you what he meant about popular education, and if that is too frivolous a subject for you he'll take you to Punch and Judy."

Half an hour afterwards a man with anxious eyes, who had been making his way through the crowd, which by this time was in general motion, had suddenly pushed himself forwards in the direction of a tall lady. Close to the tall lady was a small and very neat gentleman, who, whenever those about him collided with his immaculate garments, was making resigned grimaces, as though he were bathing in a sea too rough for him.

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Carlton, "it is really too nice to see you again. Susie, Mr. Barton is speaking to you."

Mr. Barton's face was now all smiles and friendliness. Information and questions flowed from him. He was only just back from London; he had only just reached the meeting. Unfortunately he had missed the speeches, and how was Lady Susannah? And how were all her party? and he hoped—though this hope was somewhat late in expressing itself—that Miss Vivian was feeling none the worse for her ball.

"No," said Lady Susannah, "she was with us a minute ago, but really in a crowd like this there's no keeping together."

"Indeed there is not," said Mr. Barton, who, with very considerable skill, was allowing three young women clutching each other by the hand to thrust him back into independence. In another moment Lady Susannah was lost, and Mr. Barton's eyes were searching again for the object which alone interested him. But everywhere he looked in vain for it. It seemed to be eluding him like an object pursued in dreams.

Sir Rawlin, meanwhile, with a sufficiently good grace, had been following Lady Conway's policy, the wisdom of which he recognized, although he resented its necessity; and he found it in practice both easier and more pleasant than he had anticipated. He had let himself down to the level of mere good fellowship, and his young companion had thus far appeared to desire no more. Nothing, indeed, had troubled them but a growing consciousness of the crowd. They would otherwise have actually entered the room where Punch was squeaking. This, however, as they saw at the door, was packed; but another door, not far from it, allured them by its agreeable contrast. Here, as a card announced, admission was one shilling, and

the persons who entered were few and far between. Across the door were the words, "Madame Levy, the Renowned Mesmerist."

"Come," said Miss Vivian, "do let us go in here. I see Cousin George in the distance. We will vanish before he catches us."

Their shillings, at all events, procured them sufficient quiet. The room was large, and there were but fifty people in it. Sir Rawlin and Miss Vivian seated themselves on one of the back benches. Madame Levy, a lady with black and apparently rather humid hair, was finishing a discourse about will-currents and vital fluids, and then invited any one—the more sceptical he might be, the better—to mount the platform and put her powers to the test.

"I can't do every one," she said, "but if you find me fail with some my success with others will be all the more remarkable. I should like to begin with a gentleman who disbelieves in me—a gentleman with a great, strong will, who will resist my influence. What! How is this? Is there no gentleman with a will so strong that he is not afraid to try me?"

This appeal elicited a gentleman of Wesleyan appearance, who mounted the platform like a saint defying an imitation Satan. He submitted himself gallantly to Madame Levy's requirements, and five minutes later he was dancing a clumsy hornpipe, his lips grinning, and his frock coat on the ground. The shouts of merriment which greeted his return to consciousness alone made him suspect that he had not merely closed his eyes. Other voluntary victims—most of them young men—succeeded him, and most of them with like results. One of them smoked a pencil; another rocked a chair, tenderly watching a hat on it, as though it were a baby in a cradle; and another, like a baby himself, went crawling on all fours.

"Do you think," said Miss Vivian, unable to forbear from laughing, "that all this is really genuine, or are these people her accomplices?"

"No, no," said Sir Rawlin. "It's genuine enough in its way. The old gentleman who went up first is one of my own supporters."

"Then," said Miss Vivian, with a slight grimace, "I'm not sure that I like it. It makes one laugh, of course, but after all, it's rather degrading."

"That young lady is right," said a man's voice behind her—a voice whose quiet authority had something slightly foreign in its emphasis. At the same moment Sir Rawlin felt a hand on his shoulder; and both of them, turning round, were aware of the presence of Lord Cotswold, and also of some one who was standing by him—the solitary watcher of the pier.

"And so," said Lord Cotswold to Miss Vivian, "you won't wait for our mysteries. You are studying the black art for yourself. Rawlin, let me introduce you to Dr. Thistlewood. My dear fellow,

we were late for your speech. They tell me it was quite magnificent. My distinguished friend here was very anxious to hear you."

He looked towards the place where Dr. Thistlewood had just been standing, but Dr. Thistlewood was there no longer. Without waiting for an introduction, he had slipped into a chair next Miss Vivian, and was saying to her—

"I was delighted with your criticism. A show like this is an insult to human nature."

His manner was the manner of a man familiar with all societies, and accustomed to be a personage in all. It was especially that of a man accustomed to deal with women, though there was in it no trace of any amatory or sentimental enterprise. His eyes, as he fixed them on Miss Vivian's, gave her the impression that he was looking through her, as through a telescope, at something else beyond.

"Yes," he went on, in a tone of pleasant and respectful intimacy, "a show like this degrades"—she thought he was going to say "its victims." He did not. "Degrades," he said, "in the popular mind, the commonest facts of science into a trick, or—still worse—into a miracle. It would be just as rational to give a man an emetic in public, and invite spectators either to giggle or to gape at the effects of it. Experiments of this kind are, in particular cases, sometimes necessary as tests. The other day I was testing the accuracy with which an hysterical woman, a housemaid, carried out unlikely instructions given her when in a state of hypnosis. I am not, I think, wrong in supposing you to be the young lady who told Lord Cotswold that she had seen me watching a ghost. Perhaps you think—as half the people in this room do—that what is often still called mesmerism, has something to do with spirits."

Miss Vivian responded in a tone of not disrespectful flippancy. "You don't, then," she said, "believe in spiritualism? I was rather fancying that you did."

Dr. Thistlewood laughed. "Naturalism," he answered, "if you know what I mean by the word, is far fuller of wonders than what these savages of to-day call spiritualism. The first experimenter who ever got an electric shock could only suppose that it was produced by a devil who had hidden himself in a bottle. The spiritualists of to-day reason just as he did. My dear Miss Vivian—for that, I'm sure, is your name—everything is spiritual, or nothing is. Nothing is a miracle, or else everything."

Dr. Thistlewood was beginning to interest her. At the same time his words and manner produced in her an obscure uneasiness.

"Now," she said, determining not to be discomposed, "you are taking me out of my depth; but in one thing, at least, I may agree with you without presumption. The idiotic young lady who watched you was myself and nobody else. I'm glad, for her own sake, that

she caught you at nothing wrong, or you might be giving her some *Acqua Tofana*, to rid yourself of a disagreeable witness."

"Ah, Lord Cotswold—after all those years—Lord Cotswold!" said a well-known voice—Mr. Carlton's voice—behind her. "It's a century since we met. Fancy finding you here! I do hope this distressing nonsense is over—so superstitious and vulgar. Ah, here come all the family in search of the lost lamb. Susie, she's here. Don't let them make you pay. Happily, there's nothing to pay for. Come in, Mr. Barton; drive the spirits away, if they haven't all gone already. And look here, Susie—why, this is quite a *réunion*—Lord Cotswold, I think you must have met her. We won't ask when, for fear it should have been in the year one. This is my cousin, Lady Susannah Lipscombe."

Mr. Carlton, while he spoke, had, with a courtly though nervous amity, placed one hand on the astrakhan of Lord Cotswold's cuff, and another on the limp silk of Lady Susannah's, and drew the two parties together as if he proposed to marry them. He was gratified by the success of his diplomacy. Lady Susannah succumbed at once to the magic of Lord Cotswold's manner—a manner which seemed to render all past misdemeanours fabulous; and was presently so far committing herself as to comment on the indisputable fact that he and she were almost next-door neighbours.

Mr. Barton meanwhile had been looking about him curiously—now at the mesmerist on the platform, whose performances for the time were over; now at Lord Cotswold and Dr. Thistlewood, wondering who they were. Dr. Thistlewood, in particular, with the careless self-confidence of his bearing, excited his close attention. That Miss Vivian should be so engrossed in the conversation of this striking stranger was not in itself pleasing to him. But that a stranger should be able to entertain her as well as, or even better than, Sir Rawlin, did much to relieve his mind; and whilst waiting to approach her, as he was now impatient to do, he found that he was able to greet Sir Rawlin himself, not indeed, very effusively, but with a reserve that was not obtrusive.

"I hear," he said, "that you've completed a remarkable sale of property."

"Yes," said Sir Rawlin, without a sign of embarrassment. "I hope I shall have been the means of giving you some very interesting neighbours. They are Benedictines, and they will, unless I am misinformed, bring with them a library second only to that of the Vatican."

For a single moment Mr. Barton's eyes sparkled; but before he had time for any answer other than a sarcastic cough, the affairs of the group were thrown into some confusion by a rustle of expensive materials, and a new voice that accompanied it.

"Now where is the man of all men whom I most wish to see?" The words were Lady Conway's. "Ah, there the traitor is! My dear child," she went on, coming up to Miss Vivian, "you happily don't want a doctor, even after last night. I do. I bought a villa at Naples merely to be near this one; and before my carpets are down the abominable creature goes."

Miss Vivian, though she looked at Lady Conway with eyes of somewhat doubtful friendship, showed no inclination to stand in her way now. She rose at once, and Mr. Barton was at once beside her. To his infinite delight she met him with her old cordiality, and instinctively moved away with him to a spot where their words would be unheard by others. He told her that, during his absence, he had wished to write to her about many things, and that she and her welfare had never been out of his mind, which observations, hurried and subdued as they were, were received by her with a comprehending acknowledgment almost beyond his hopes. She, at all events, was not lost to him; and the bitterest of his anxieties being thus more or less at an end, he began to assume something of his old position as her adviser.

"And so," he said, "I hear you were last night at a ball. I confess that, when we talked about a little social amusement for you, I was hardly thinking about balls, and still less was I thinking about exhibitions of such idle quackery as mesmerism."

"I agree with you," replied Miss Vivian, "as I was just now saying to Sir Rawlin, that this exhibition is very stupid. But mesmerism, after all, isn't mere nonsense like spiritualism. It's merely a kind of doctoring done on a public stage."

"Pardon me," returned Mr. Barton. "You have got the case upside down. The phenomena of spiritualism, though in most cases they are fraudulent, are undoubtedly sometimes genuine, and are, as the Church recognizes, the work of evil spirits—or spirits, to say the least of it, with whom Christians have no license to trifle. But this mesmerism is quackery pure and simple. It's curious how people who won't believe in God are the first people to believe in imaginary and—as they call them—occult powers of the body or the human will. Who, by the way, brought you here? That man whom I saw you talking to?"

"Do you mean," said Miss Vivian, answering one question with another—"do you mean Dr. Thistlewood—the man of whom Lady Conway has so very completely possessed herself?"

"Dr. Thistlewood!" echoed Mr. Barton. "Can that man be Dr. Thistlewood? And do you mean to tell me that you yourself have been making his acquaintance? Yes, it undoubtedly must be. I recognize him from his pictures in the newspapers. Do you know who Dr. Thistlewood is? One of the most notorious sceptics in

Europe, and, I can well believe, one of the most superstitious also. And is that Lady Conway—the woman whom one always reads about? How has all this happened? How do you come to be knowing people like these? And the other man, with a fur collar, who reminds me of a mediæval wizard—they all three seem very intimate—is he, may I ask, one of your new acquaintances also?"

"Oh," said Miss Vivian, looking over her shoulder, "I suppose you must mean Lord Cotswold."

"Lord Cotswold!" exclaimed Mr. Barton. "This is better and better. You remember what was said about Lord Cotswold at your aunt's table the other day? I congratulate you on your company. Do you owe it to your friend, Sir Rawlin? Alas," he said, taking out his watch, "I must go. I've a service at half-past five. My dear child," he went on, resuming his natural manner, "if all this dissipation is not distracting your thoughts too much, I ought to come very soon, and begin our talks about Confirmation. Will you, or your aunt, write me a line, and let me know when to call on you—to-morrow, perhaps, or the day after?"

"Sir Rawlin," said Lady Conway, "come here. I want to have a word with you in private. Dr. Thistlewood's Lecture is to be on Friday. There won't be a word in it under thirteen syllables. Insist on your young lady being brought to that. You can arrange about it with the family now. She doesn't like me—the young lady doesn't. That's because I'm doing her good."

The party were here informed by a very apologetic attendant that the room was about to be cleared, preparatory to another *séance*. They were indeed by this time the only members of the public left.

"Good heavens!" said Lady Conway. "Let us fly. Nobody shall mesmerize *me*."

CHAPTER VI

THE fevered apprehension into which on his return last night Mr. Barton had worked himself as he contemplated the ballroom windows, had indeed been assuaged by Miss Vivian the moment he actually met her again. But now, when, having left her, he thought of her new associates, their aspect, their reputed character, and the easy manner in which she had herself mentioned them, his previous trouble reasserted itself, in a less acute, but in a more pervasive, form. It was the same trouble that had assailed him at Lady Susannah's luncheon party, when he first realized the possibility of the girl's nature being swayed by influences other than those which for him were alone sacred. It was the jealousy of a new atmosphere.

Such was his state of mind when, making his way towards his church, he found himself passing the doors of the Southquay Museum Buildings, one of whose halls was used for scientific and other lectures. Lists of the subjects now in course of being dealt with were displayed in striking type on placards which flanked the door. Most of these were familiar objects, having been there for half the winter; but Mr. Barton's eyes this afternoon were caught by a new announcement, which eclipsed the others by its freshness and the size of its bold lettering—an announcement of a lecture entitled "The New Psychology," the lecturer being none other than the objectionable Dr. Gustav Thistlewood. Mr. Barton stopped short and stared at it.

Science, as the foe of religion, was, in Mr. Barton's opinion, operative mainly amongst vicious and ill-educated artisans. He was, however, haunted by the conviction that what occurred in this lower social stratum was not without its lamentable counterpart in a certain section of the highest, where Materialism was made an excuse for every species of refined licence; and the insidious influences which a society of this kind might exercise, seemed to him typified by the grandiose polish of Lord Cotswold, by the subdued self-confidence of Dr. Thistlewood, and by the very smell of Lady Conway's furs.

The fashionable Materialism of to-day was a kind of spiritual diphtheria, which would pass away and would leave the Church

untouched; but meanwhile it might be deadly to individual souls, and to one soul in particular. This young soul, which had been committed to his special keeping, required that he should mount guard over it more closely than ever. He must see her again in private at the earliest moment possible.

He contemplated the placard with a slight ironical laugh. Dr. Thistlewood had doubtless in some cases shown himself a successful healer. But that a man should think himself qualified, because he understood pills, to give his opinion on the workings of the living human mind, was, in Mr. Barton's estimation, comparable to the claim of a cobbler to direct the armies of his country because he supplied their boots. The folly of such men was truly as great as their wickedness; but yet, when he reflected on how this typical pretender was being presented as an oracle to the imagination of a super-sensitive girl, anger got the better of contempt, and solicitude got the better of anger.

As for Miss Vivian herself, Lady Conway, could she have looked inside her, would have smiled to see that the treatment which her own wisdom had suggested, showed some slight signs already of producing its designed result. The girl had awoke that morning from a long series of dreams, in which something constantly sought for had been for ever eluding her, to find herself in a state of languid, though not wholly unpleasant melancholy, which persisted till her adventures at the fête gave a new aspect to everything. There each moment of sight-seeing had filled her with a delightful gaiety. Even the proposal which Sir Rawlin did not fail to make, that they should go to Dr. Thistlewood's lecture, and which Lady Susannah had assented to, holding that a taste for lectures was a sign of steadiness in the young, came to her as a prospect of present happiness repeating itself. But as soon as the afternoon was over, she felt that there had been a want somewhere. Her companion, instead of coming with her to the step of her aunt's carriage, had bidden her a hasty, though doubtless a very friendly, adieu, and allowed himself to be carried off by Lady Conway to the offices of the Conservative Association. She had been gay in his company; that fact remained. But was gaiety all she sought for? Was gaiety alone everything?

That night in her sitting-room, to which she retreated early, she sank as if quite exhausted into a low chair by her fireside, and took from a table close to her a small, thin, oblong book. It was Mr. Barton's "Secret Way," whose pages were by this time liberally scored with pencil-marks. She turned these languidly, till she came to the following passage:—

"Even the material world which so-called science studies has—for both it and the soul were made by the same God—analogies in

itself by which the world of the spirit is illuminated. Such science, for example, tells us this—that there is no desire implanted in any living creature which does not indicate the existence somewhere of that wherewithal it shall be satisfied. Thus, for bodies numbed with cold there is the warmth of sun and fire. For tired muscles and heavy eyes there is sleep. In the hunger of a lamb is a witness to the growing of the green pastures. With respect, indeed, to any bodily want or desire whatever, the actual existence of its true corresponding object may, even before we have imagined it, be inferred from the desire itself,—just as, to take another analogy supplied, not by living, but by mere brute, lifeless matter—from the movements of a planet seen is inferred the existence of a planet unseen, which influences them. So it is with the soul. If thy soul desire something which it has not yet found, know thou that somewhere this thing desired exists; and if, believing that thou hast found it, thou wouldst know whether thou hast found it truly, examine thy heart afresh, and ask whether thy heart is satisfied."

Next morning a letter reached her, the masculine writing on whose envelope she saw for the first time. Her heart beat with pleasure, and then stood still with doubt. The letter was very short, amounting to no more than this:—

"I shall be very husy up to the time of Dr. Thistlewood's lecture, but hope we shall meet then. Don't forget to come. The subject sounds dry, but I think that the watcher of the pier will make it interesting to both of us. I am, meanwhile, your friend who wishes the best for you.

"RAWLIN STANTOR."

The reception of this letter caused her to write another, almost as brief, and addressed to a different person. A servant was instructed to take it to the Reverend Theophilus Barton.

"DEAR MR. BARTON" (it ran),

"You kindly said you would come and talk to me, either to-morrow or else to-day. Will you come to-day? To-day nobody wants me, so name any hour you like. It will be nice to see you quietly once more, and talk about what really matters. You have always been very good to me.

"N. V."

Mr. Barton, as he read this, felt a thankfulness beyond the reach of words. In heart he had been already with her, taking this tender life again under the protection of his brooding wings.

Lady Susannah had arranged, as she had done on similar

occasions previously, that he should, when he arrived in the afternoon, be shown into her own boudoir, her instincts telling her that this apartment, close to the front door, was in itself a chaperon, whose presence was decorous, though of course it was unnecessary. Here Mr. Barton found Miss Vivian awaiting him. Her aspect shocked, yet at the same time subtly pleased him. Her cheeks were pale; and she rose, with what seemed an effort, from a table at which, without much apparent success, she was constraining herself to do her duty by a bowl of soup with some bread in it.

"You're not to think," she said, laughing, "that these are my usual habits. I've been told to eat this, for I couldn't manage much luncheon."

Profoundly touched, he seated himself at a little distance from her, and said simply and kindly—

"This is very, very sad. I fear you have overtired yourself. Go on with your soup. I haven't come here to scold you, but too many hours at balls—don't you think I am right?—are almost more exhausting than too many hours in church."

The girl looked at him with a smile in which, gentle as it was, there lurked a fugitive suggestion of worldliness condescending to worldly ignorance.

"Dear Mr. Barton," she said, "you needn't preach to me about balls. The ball did nothing to tire me. My mind wants a tonic, I think, far more than my body."

"I can well believe that," he said, seating himself at a little distance from her. "I have long been desiring this time when we can begin our talks in earnest. Come, shall we be methodical? You must not look on me as a pedant. The things which I must begin with saying to you, you of course have heard before; but I want you to consider them as a system."

And forthwith he set himself, in simple and lucid language, to elucidate the position of the soul and of human beings as a race, in the light which the Church, with her revelation and her treasures of philosophy, throws on it. The Church, he said, and the Church alone, makes the object of our life, and even our existence, intelligible and reasonable things. We must, he said, begin with ourselves. How did we come to exist? For we were not our own creators. We were created by some other Power, and this Power, to say the least of it, could not be less intelligent or less good than ourselves; for the Lesser, as was self-evident, could not produce the Greater. This axiom of the intellect was seconded by the voice of conscience, which, by condemning our own moral imperfections, told us that the Source of our being, or, in other words, God, was perfect. How, then, were our own imperfections—the war in our members—to be accounted for? The word of God informed us. Our imperfections did not,

and could not, come from God Himself. We bore them as a burden inherited from our first earthly parents. The spiritual history of man, and the solution of all its problems, were comprised in two documents—the written Bible, and the living activity of the Church. The latter continued the process which was revealed and recorded in the former, thus linking together the earliest times with the latest. In the first chapter of Genesis, with its account of the primal tragedy, a complete foretelling of Christ and the Catholic Church was latent. Then in the inspired history of the Chosen People and its woes, we had the history of the individual soul writ large. Here we saw its misery in doing what it did not desire, there we saw its misery in desiring what it could not get. Then, when Christ came, and when His work was continued by the Church, we saw how their divinity, quite apart from external evidences, was attested by the marvellous fact that they brought to the human heart those precise forms of help and guidance the need of which, with increasing clearness, it had been signalizing from the dawn of time. This fact, Mr. Barton went on to say, was illustrated most signally by the Church's sacramental system, which touched life at every point, from the bed of birth to the death-bed—first through the dews of Baptism, then through the succour of Confirmation, of which they would speak hereafter; then through that Second Advent which took place at every good Communion, when our Lord, as it were, laid His head on the breasts of all who loved Him; then through the Christian marriage—that great triumph over the Evil One—which turned all that warred against the Spirit into an embodied and life-long holiness; then the sacraments of cleansing penance, and pardon; and, lastly, those which turned the death-bed into a solemn bridal.

The girl listened absorbed; and, although she was still pensive, she seemed to be breathing the atmosphere of some assuaging peace, Mr. Barton's face seeming to her like a face in some far-off chancel.

"Well," said Mr. Barton, when at last he rose to go, "when shall I come to see you again, and speak about Confirmation in detail? I have other sheep in my flock, you know, to be talked to about the same subject. Shall we say the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes," said the girl, her eyes soft with some ambiguous gratitude. "I will expect you then. Good-bye."

The priest departed, taking with him as much peace as he had brought; but this was ruffled next morning by the following few words, which were brought to him, scrawled in pencil: "Instead of to-morrow, Friday, do you think you could come to-day? I had forgotten; but to-morrow we are going to Dr. Thistlewood's lecture."

In spite of the other calls on him, Mr. Barton punctually came. Pleased by the urgency of her summons, the occasion of it roused in him an anxiety so harsh as to be almost irritable, nor did the

submissive warmth of her welcome, or her continued pallor, disarm him.

"And so," he began, "I gather that you are going to betake yourself to instructions very different from mine. My dear child, if you haven't found what you want in dancing-rooms, or in the tricks of a mesmerist, do you think you will find it in a doctor's disquisition on psychology? At its best, psychology is a dry, and for most of us a superfluous study. Any child can tell itself more about the motions of its own mind than it could learn from an army of psychological lecturers. Do you know what psychology is? I can explain it to you in half a dozen words. When you and I talk, the different sounds we form depend on the different ways in which the tongue touches the teeth, the roof of the mouth and so on; and wiseacres can tell us—I dare say with perfect truth—what particular movements of the tongue produce each particular sound. But for you and me, and for human beings generally—whatever may be the case with the wiseacres—the important thing is the words and the sentences we utter, not the particular gymnastics which the tongue performs in uttering them. The science of psychology is to the operations of the mind just what the science of articulation is to the use of speech. It can tell us no more of the uses to which our minds should be put, than an account of the manner in which our Blessed Lord used his tongue could bring home to your soul or mine the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Miss Vivian, "and I don't think I much care, what psychology is, but we're all of us going, just to hear a famous man."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Barton, reassured by the indifference of her manner, "the worst this precious lecture can do for you will be to keep you out of the open air; and this talk about psychology, new or old, about which you will hear to-morrow from an expert in drugs and doses, has not perhaps been very inappropriate after all. The proper meaning of psychology is an accurate knowledge of the soul; and our own subject—differences being duly allowed for—involves, and indeed rests upon, a sort of psychology of its own. So let us begin with that. You'll find it all set out in the little manual I gave you, or indeed in any other which does justice to the Church's teaching."

Mr. Barton then set himself to explain—questioning his listener at intervals, to make sure that she followed him, that the whole meaning of Confirmation depended on a certain fact as to the constitution of the human soul. This was the fact that, as the Church had always taught, as Miss Vivian would learn from any other Anglican priest, and as God had directly revealed to us, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, the soul of man is possessed of

seven distinct faculties, which are essential to its spiritual life. The first man Adam possessed these in full perfection. By his fall, though not extinguished, they lost their strength, both in himself and in all descended from him. The sacrament of Confirmation gave, he said, their pristine strength back to them. These seven faculties which, when thus completely restored to us, are called "the gifts of the Spirit" consist, Mr. Barton went on to say, of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Spiritual Strength, Holy Fear, and Godliness. Imagination, memory, human affection, the sense of beauty, and so forth—all the faculties, in short, of which we are cognizant in ordinary life—could, he said, be applied to their proper purpose only when guided and illuminated by these seven sacramental gifts. He then proceeded to explain that these seven gifts of the Spirit—"We have another chapter," he observed, "of Divine psychology here"—caused to germinate in the soul the Nine Fruits of the Spirit, foremost amongst which were Love, and Joy, and Peace. It was thus, he said in conclusion, that the grace given in Confirmation enabled the whole inner being of man to complete itself, and to reach even here to foretastes of its future perfect union with Him in whom Love, and Joy, and Peace, and all Beauty are one.

This exposition, which was made with great logical simplicity, occupied a considerable time, during most of which Mr. Barton looked steadily at the green Brussels carpet. It had been enough for him to feel that he was one human soul directly urging the deepest of all truths on another, which other, as the voice of his Lord had told him, he might guide and cherish as though, in some special sense, she were his own. He attempted neither by voice nor glance to make his instructions the vehicle of any common sentimentality. He was hardly, indeed, conscious of himself. It was only when he came to his summing up of the matter that his listener caught his eyes, and saw them shining with exaltation, like the windows of a far-off city.

"And now," he said, rising and standing with his back to the fireplace, "I've finished my homily for to-day. Well—dear child—I honestly believe that you have understood me, and that you will ponder these things in your heart. Yes, yes—and I have one thing more to add. Don't make too much of what I said about this wonderful lecture. If the man's right, well and good. If he's wrong, he won't bite us. Your own people are going. By all means go also. Indeed, I may myself look in for an hour or so, and hear the old bones rattled again—sensation, cognition, apperception—whose sound I used to hate at Cambridge. An apothecary in a metaphysician's chair—that will, at all events, be a novelty. Do you object to the thought that I am doing what I can to watch over you?"

"No, indeed," she answered. "On the contrary, I am more than grateful."

CHAPTER VII

THE interest excited in Southquay by Dr. Thistlewood's fame and personality was evidenced the following afternoon by the large number of carriages which were setting down their well-dressed occupants at the doors of the Museum Buildings. Whereas on ordinary occasions the fact of an impending lecture would merely have been indicated by the furtive and intermittent disappearance, through doors which stood half open, of a few sadly clothed persons, like worshippers who were entering a chapel unsuited to their social status, silk skirts rustled in the entrance, servants stood outside, and amongst the general stir a spruce-looking one-horse brougham, the door of which was opened by a tall footman in powder, emitted the persons of Lord Cotswold and the renowned lecturer himself. Then Lady Conway drove up in a particularly shabby cab, as though all vehicles which fell short of the splendour of her own were the same for her. Mrs. Morriston Campbell followed, swaying in a large barouche, and nearly fell down, as she alighted, in her futile efforts to catch Lady Conway's eye. All she could do was to follow in her wake to the lecture-room, where Sir Rawlin and Lord Cotswold were leaning against the wall, talking; whilst Lady Susannah, Miss Arundel, and Miss Vivian were already seated, waiting as if in church.

"Come," said Lady Conway to Sir Rawlin, "that's your place, by the young lady. Don't forget my advice. Sit down, and explain the long words to her."

In accordance with custom, the lecturer was introduced by a chairman, an old inhabitant of Southquay, and its intellectual patron. This gentleman, an octogenarian of vigorous and distinguished aspect, began by reminding his hearers that Dr. Thistlewood was known throughout Europe for certain dramatic incidents in his career—which were, indeed, matters of history—and also by his success in certain public enterprises. Besides being the hero of the great Neapolitan pestilence, he was the founder of what was now one of the best-known health-resorts in France, where treatment was accorded to necessitous patients gratuitously; but greater even than his

achievements as a man of healing, though not so generally understood, were his achievements as a man of research. "Take, for instance," said the chairman, pleasantly, "this science of the mind, or psychology. When I was at Oxford fifty-five years ago, nothing could have been more dreary and unprofitable. We were no wiser at the end than we were at the beginning of our study of it. I see a reverend contemporary of mine at the other end of the room, and I'm sure he'll bear me out." At this there was the inevitable laugh, and a turning of heads towards a well-known and white-haired cleric, who nodded a placid acquiescence. "But now," continued the chairman, "during the lifetime of the youngest of you—you young people have a great deal to be thankful for—we've changed all that, and Dr. Thistlewood is eminent amongst those who have helped to change it. About the nature of the change I will only presume to say one thing. You'll find that he has made psychology a very much nicer medicine. It used to be something like our grey and our brown powders, the taste of which I remember still. But in telling you this, I only represent prophecy. I will now call upon my distinguished friend here for its fulfilment."

Dr. Thistlewood rose, and a burst of applause greeted him. His aspect invested the lecture with the qualities of an exhibition or an entertainment. With one hand resting negligently on the chairman's table, with his shoulders thrown slightly back, and the piercing imperiousness of his eyes softened to a benignant courtesy, he began his address like a high-bred man of affairs—like a soldier or a successful diplomat—about to discuss achievements which were more or less his own, but for him were of interest only in connection with their general consequences.

The chairman, he said, had relieved him of the most difficult part of his business, namely, the introduction of it. What he was going to speak about was not so much psychology generally, as the differences which distinguish the new psychology from the old. Psychology, as they all knew, meant the science of the mind and its workings. But we only knew that we had minds because we were conscious, as selves, of having them. It would, therefore, be better to define psychology as the science of the living self. Now, how was this self to be studied? Since we only know that we have selves because consciousness tells us so, the most natural answer to this question was that we must study self by examining the facts of consciousness. This was the assumption with which the old psychology started, and with this assumption it ended. It sought for its facts wholly within the limits of the conscious circle. The new psychology differed essentially from the old, because, though likewise taking these facts as its starting-point, it had come to recognize that they did not stand alone, but were merely some

fraction of a very much larger process, most of which lay beyond the limits of the conscious self altogether. "For example," said Dr. Thistlewood, "if we wanted to know why a man did some particular thing, the old psychology assumed that he need only honestly examine himself, and that then he could, if he would, give us a complete answer. Here we have the psychology of the confessional. The new psychology recognizes that in the case—it will be enough for me here to say in the case of two-thirds of our actions, the most searching self-examination could no more explain their origin than a baby foundling could recount to us the biography of its great-great-grandparents. Here we have the fact which the old psychology overlooked. It behaved as a man would who thought he could explain the England of to-day—the trains in which he travels, the electric light he reads by—if everything were a blank to him which lay beyond the memories of the present generation. This error the new psychology rectifies. It does not neglect the conscious—or we may call it the self-examinable—but it shows that this is explicable only by connecting it with the unconscious."

Such generalities, said Dr. Thistlewood, were no doubt rather dry. He would now enliven them with illustrations. He would begin with the case of memory. If we wished to make sure that a servant remembered some order given him, our great endeavour would be to make the man keenly conscious of it—to dig it into him, as we say. Memory, indeed, seemed to most people to be an affair of consciousness or to be nothing. But the new psychology told us a very different tale. It showed us that facts might be remembered for half a lifetime, which had, at the time of their occurrence, never made any entry into the domain of consciousness at all. He proceeded to give a number of quaint and curious cases, such as that of a Swiss woman—a great heroine amongst spiritualists—who in certain abnormal states would mouth out Sanscrit words, these being accepted by her friends as the utterances of a disembodied spirit. It afterwards appeared that this woman, in her early childhood, had been often in a room where a professor of Oriental languages would mutter scraps of Sanscrit as he waited for his morning chocolate. The child never knew she had heard them, but thirty years later they projected themselves from the mouth of the morbid woman. To such cases he would add that of a French postman, who was terrified at finding that, when drunk, he had lost a valuable letter, but retained in his sober state no memory of the incident. He was made drunk again. He remembered it, and the letter was found, thrown away in a ditch by a road near Paris. Dr. Thistlewood said that he mentioned this last case because, simple as it seemed, it threw a vivid light on a question we were all compelled to ask. No memories exist in a conscious form always.

What are they when they are not conscious? In what do they reside or inhere? They don't reside in the clouds. We obviously carry them about with us; for with appropriate instruments we can recover them. In what they reside the postman's case showed us. The instrument by which they were recovered in his case was a litre of strong red wine, and the wine operated by affecting his nervous system, or rather some special tracts of it. The nervous system, then, was the basis of all consciousness—the basis of what we mean by self. Self was a portion of that system, in a certain special condition. In other words, self for psychology was a function of the nervous organism.

"Of course," said Dr. Thistlewood, "the clergy—and they are well within their province in doing so—will tell us that the self or soul has a secret existence of its own behind this nervous organism and transcending it. I wish to say nothing here in contradiction of this doctrine. I say only that, if this doctrine is true, we must learn it from the clergy, and not from psychological science. Science must be austerely humble, and remain within its own boundaries." The few clergymen in the room here testified their approbation. "Psychology," Dr. Thistlewood continued, "deals only with the self as we know it under the present conditions of our existence; and, so long as we approach it under these conditions, it is inseparable from the nervous system, and can only be understood as a product of it."

It was by a recognition of this fact, he went on, that psychology had ceased to be an affair of private and conflicting self-examinations, and had become a science in the true sense of the word. It had supplemented the self-examinations of the recluse by the experiments of the laboratory and the hospital. These methods of observation, he said, were revealing a world of wonders, all exhibiting the conscious life of the self as an efflorescence of the non-conscious organism—or as a candle-flame dependent on the wax which it melts for its own consumption. He described, by way of example, a case which had been studied by some of the foremost doctors of France, in which the successive application of steel, soft iron, magnets, and electricity to parts of the body of a hystero-epileptic patient, his temper, his manners, his morals, his religious beliefs, and the whole contents of his conscious memory were changed. "I wish," said Dr. Thistlewood, "I could make all this more vivid for you by showing you some records, which I am having made of such cases, in the form of moving photographs, and of gramophone records also, which would give you a good idea of how such people behaved. My apparatus, however, is not at this moment available. Well," he continued, "to many of you all this may seem very revolutionary; but if it destroys some of our old beliefs, it is, in the most

sensational way, reconstructive of others. I said I should avoid trespassing on the proper domain of the clergy, but I think they will forgive me if I here stray over the border. There are a large number of miracles ascribed to the saints of Christendom, which, though the Roman Church still regards them as genuine, Protestantism and science alike have been accustomed to dismiss as ridiculous and degrading fables."

A slight sound in the body of the hall here made the lecturer pause. It was caused by Mr. Barton, who was at that moment entering. The sound of the words "saints" and "miracles" arrested him in the act of searching for a place. He subsided into a chair with a frown of prospective antagonism.

"Many of these miracles," Dr. Thistlewood continued, "so long derided by Protestant and scientific rationalism, the psychological science of to-day is actually giving back to us as facts. Indeed, for the scientific, for the experimental psychologist, some of the most valuable documents we possess are comprised in the old accounts of certain of the mediæval saints." Mr. Barton could hardly believe his ears. Dr. Thistlewood said that he alluded to such phenomena as trance and ecstasy, to the seeing of visions, to the hearing of spiritual voices, and to the actual development in saints' bodies of the stigmata. Experimental psychology, founded as it was on observation, now recognized such alleged facts as genuine; for the psychologist was daily encountering, amongst the human specimens submitted to him, similar facts himself; and when they occurred, they coincided in the most startling way with minute details recorded by the hagiologists of the Roman Church. The occurrence even of stigmatization had been actually witnessed in hospitals. The occurrence of trance and ecstasy, Divine visions, the hearing of unspeakable words, the consciousness of an abnormal insight into the Divine mystery of existence, might be called comparatively common. They could be produced even in a healthy subject by the inhalation of certain vapours. But apart from the employment of a medical artifice such as this, these phenomena were always accompanied by certain physical symptoms—very specific symptoms, which happened to be precisely those ascribed to the saints by their biographers. Amongst these symptoms, for example, were certain affections of the skin, often mentioned as exhibited by the great ecstatics, and identical with those distinctive of hysterical visionaries to-day. The ravishment of the saints, as we learnt from St. Teresa herself, was always accompanied by a depression of breathing and circulation. These precise symptoms were now recognized as accompaniments of the ravishments of the hospital. More curious still, such ravishments as the saints experienced were said to have been accompanied, in some cases, by extraordinary contortions of the body.

St. Christina, for example, commonly called "mirabilis," was said to have been, during her ecstasies, contracted into a spherical form, or —as her biographer put it—rolled up like a hedge-hog. Precisely the same thing occurred in cases of hystero-epilepsy. The vision of the Apostle Paul under the midday sun of Syria, was at one time lightly dismissed by scientific men as a fairy-tale. Psychologists now recognized that, in all its generic features, it coincided with well-known effects of sunstroke. "I will," said Dr. Thistlewood, "again beg leave to impress on you that there is nothing in all this which need conflict with the faith of Christians. Just as the psychologist's identification of the self with the organic system need not hinder the clergy from maintaining that there is a transcendental self in the background, so the identification of certain abnormal phenomena, as manifested by saints and apostles, with occurrences daily observable in our hospitals and elsewhere, need not prevent the clergy from maintaining that there was in the former cases some additional element wholly unknown to science, and present in those cases only."

And now, Dr. Thistlewood said, he would descend from abnormal facts to normal, which were for the old psychology no less inexplicable. Here he would once again refer to the Apostle Paul. They all remembered the Apostle's celebrated confession: "The evil which I would not, that I do." This paradoxical antagonism between the act and the conscious will was a mystery to the Apostle himself, and has remained a mystery till yesterday. The new psychology had now thrown a flood of light on it. By showing us that all our consciousness was the product of non-conscious activities, it exhibited will, or the conscious impulse to action, as surrounded by other impulses of which consciousness told us nothing, but which differed from will only as, in the case of some enormous mechanism, wheels and levers, of whose action we could take no count because they were lost in darkness, differed from others which were revealed to us by a bull's-eye lantern. The old psychology confined itself to those few parts of the mechanism which lay within the illuminated circle. No wonder it was mystified by observing that the wheels which alone were visible to it were often reversed by some agency which was not in these wheels themselves. But when once it was realized that these few visible wheels were but parts of some larger mechanism, with a complex apparatus of unseen reversing gears, springs, and detents, which acted on them, the element of mystery and paradox altogether disappeared.

Finally, from the antagonism between the conscious will and the act, they would pass to the succession of wills, each antagonistic to the other. Philip drunk differed from Philip sober. Love prevailed one week. Prudence prevailed the next. Familiar facts like these

showed us that the area of consciousness—or, in other words, the content of what we commonly call self—was not stationary, but moved, as the light flung from a lantern might, and had for its focal nucleus different brain centres in succession; and of a series of conscious states, thus varying in their content, what we commonly mean by self, or by personal identity, was composed. The question remained, however, of how these states were connected. What rendered the series one self instead of many selves? The answer to this question might be given in two forms. One was subjective—namely, a general continuity of memory. The other was objective—namely, the physical basis of memory, or, the continuous functioning, to use yet more technical language, of certain parts of one normally co-ordinated organism. "In other words," Dr. Thistlewood went on, "what the new psychology shows, to make the matter short, is this: that these selves of ours, which we used to think so simple, are each of them a sort of family whose common life is supported by the co-operation of a thousand servants. Most of these servants the family never sees at all; and it sees, of those whom it does see, only two or three at a time. And now," said Dr. Thistlewood, "to conclude. The general upshot of what I have just been saying may be briefly expressed thus. The new psychology takes much, with which we are familiar, away from us, but it gives us something in return, which, when its strangeness has gone, we shall find to be more than an equivalent. The old psychology said, through one of its most accomplished representatives, 'We feel that we are greater than we know.' The new psychology answers—and will you carry its answer away with you?—'We know that we are greater than we feel.'"

"My dear Dr. Gustav," said Lady Conway, when all was over, "I'm delighted to hear that I keep so large an establishment, and that when I do wrong it's all the fault of the kitchen-maids. I must tell you, however, that for my own part I feel my greatness as well as know it, for to-night I'm going to meet you at dinner."

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Barton, who had come to the lecture with a view to detecting the errors in it, and taking them for a text in some future conversation with Miss Vivian, found himself for the first few moments in a state of bewildered surprise, which had in it the conflicting flavours of unexpected approval and of disappointment. The announcement which greeted him on his entrance that the new psychology was rehabilitating the miracles of the mediæval saints—he could not quarrel with that, although he would have liked to do so; and again, the lecturer's manner—this certainly was not the manner of an "apothecary" turned quack philosopher. Still, Mr. Barton felt that there was something not right somewhere; and then came the sentence in which the great Vision of Paul, whilst admitted to be a fact, was assimilated to the ordinary results of sunstroke. Mr. Barton felt at once that his original prevision was justified; and when he grasped more clearly the general line of the argument—when he heard man's self spoken of as a function of his organic system, his immortal soul as a product of a bundle of perishable nerves—he was less scandalized than delighted to find that even the most accomplished of sceptics inevitably fell to the level of the infidel of the street and the pothouse. Nothing is more gratifying to an opponent than to hear his enemy, in deliberate terms, expose himself.

Mr. Barton had hoped to ascertain, the moment he entered, if Miss Vivian were present, possibly to sit near her, and, at all events, to note her companions and the manner in which she comported herself. But the crowd, for which he was not prepared, made any such observations impracticable, so he resigned himself to waiting till the end; and then, when the end came, and he stood in the gangway looking for her, he felt himself ready to meet her with new confidence and authority. It would, indeed, not be difficult for him to deal with this Dr. Thistlewood.

As the audience gradually thinned, and no Miss Vivian appeared, he saw that, in the neighbourhood of the platform, a numerous group remained; and there, not far from some sables which he recognized as Lady Conway's, was a hat which could, as he knew, belong to

one person only. Towards this group he began to push his way, but before he could get near it, the outgoers being still numerous, he encountered Mr. George Carlton, who, nervously holding his hat so as to protect it against the pressure of the public, assumed, on catching sight of him, an expression of beckoning intelligence.

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Carlton, "I've just been sent to look for you. You're not gone—that's delightful. My cousin Lady Susannah wants you to come to tea with her. I ought to tell you that there's a plot to make you sing—perhaps a duet with a certain young person who is your pupil; and I'm quite sure that you'll be dear and nice and obliging. Lord Cotswold is coming—so musical and interesting; and he is most anxious to hear you. There he is. Let me introduce you."

Mr. Barton could not refuse. He did not indeed wish to do so. During the past half-hour he had become conscious of a new attitude. The world would not hurt him. He could meet it on its own ground; and by mixing with it, and observing its dangers, he would be able all the better to guard others against them. Whilst this was passing in his mind, he heard Mr. Carlton describing him as "such a dear fellow—such a charming fellow—most cultivated;" and a moment later he found himself the recipient of a bow from Lord Cotswold, so grave, stately, and deferent that a bishop could have desired no more.

"I hear, Mr. Barton," said Lord Cotswold, "that you have travelled much in the East, studying its churches. I also am an architectural palmer, and have brought back many relics from Palestine. My reliquaries are portfolios. Some day you must let me show them to you."

Meanwhile, in the group to which Mr. Barton had thus attached himself, a slight movement was being caused by the departure of one of its members. This was Sir Rawlin Stantor.

"You're not coming to tea, then?" said Miss Vivian, as he held her hand.

"If I can," he answered, in a tone that at once moved and chilled her. "I have an appointment at the office first. It was all I could do to steal time for the lecture. The sooner I go the more chance I have of coming back to you afterwards. This evening I make a speech. One can't always do what one wants to do."

"Listen," said Lady Conway, detaining him for a moment; "I congratulate you. Your manner to the young person during the lecture was a model of retrogressive prudence."

When Mr. Barton, who fraternally went shares in a very slow cab with Mr. Carlton, reached Cliff's End, the rest of the party were already assembled in the drawing-room. Lady Conway's dress and

Lord Cotswold's somewhat florid presence made him feel, the moment he entered, as though somehow or other the homely apartment had been refurnished. Lord Cotswold, divining that Miss Arundel was not endowed with the gifts which capture the attention of strangers, was devoting himself to her with a benignant courtliness, and was actually talking about poultry. Mr. Hugo, on his best behaviour, was smiling a shy smile, and was explaining to Lady Conway, who sat in a window and encouraged him, that the bank of shadowy purple rising along the horizon was the shadow of the earth cast upwards by the departed sun; whilst Oswald looked on in his most diplomatic of attitudes, feeling too superior to be jealous; and Miss Vivian, distinguished among the rest as though she were some expensive flower, exhibited a smiling weariness which was ready for its ornamental duties.

"Ah," she said to Mr. Barton, with some slight signs of animation, "I'm glad you've come. I believe we're to be fellow-victims."

This intimate welcome would have comforted Mr. Barton greatly, had he not caught sight of something which produced in him a new disturbance. Lady Susannah, who had at first escaped his observation, came forward from somewhere, in conversation with a male guest, and the two, conversing still, took up a position on the hearth-rug. This guest was the very man who, half an hour ago, had been pompously enunciating in their shallowest and most childish form doctrines which were fatal to all spiritual religion, and declaring that the earliest evidence which we possess of the Lord's Resurrection was due to the action of the sun on the back of St. Paul's head. And to this man with the quiet, intrepid eyes—this Satan in modern clothes, Mr. Barton's hostess—his simple, his Christian hostess—was talking confidentially with a touch of pink in her cheeks, and with an eagerness almost girlish. Moreover, so far as Mr. Barton could gather, the subject which the two were discussing had some connection with the lecture.

To a certain extent he was right. "Of course, Dr. Thistlewood," Lady Susannah had been saying, "I couldn't understand much of it, but I'm quite sure that nerves have a great deal to do with all of us. My niece there, whom I think you know—she's stronger now, thank God!—her health, her spirits, one might almost say her thoughts, have seemed at times to be hanging on a hair trigger."

"Ah," said Dr. Thistlewood, looking in Miss Vivian's direction, "a very interesting young lady—to me particularly so. Could you tell me a little more about her?"

Lady Susannah told him the story of the attack of influenza, and what had followed it, not omitting to mention the girl's dread of thunder.

"That must," she said, "be purely the result of atmospheric conditions on her nerves; for, as to her mind, nobody could be more sensible. Before she came to me, she was under Dr. Gonteau at Nice."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Thistlewood. "He's one of my best friends. Well, Lady Susannah, nothing is new to doctors. What first interested me in your niece was a likeness to a certain young woman—though, of course, there are great differences—whom I once came across in Italy, and once again in Scotland."

"Did she," asked Lady Susannah, "suffer from nerves too?"

Dr. Thistlewood laughed. "It's because the two," he said, "are so utterly unlike in point of nervousness, that I find something interesting in their general and superficial likeness. Often such a likeness means a likeness in character also. In the case of twins this is sometimes extremely striking."

"My dear Dr. Gustav," said Lady Conway, looking placidly up at him, "what's all this about twins? Aren't you becoming rather Gampish?"

"I was," said Dr. Thistlewood, "telling Lady Susannah, that the physical likeness between twins is often accompanied by a moral likeness also. Indeed, if their physical likeness and the likeness of their external circumstances were complete, their lives and thoughts would be as similar as the movements of two similar clocks. You think I'm laughing," he went on, "but I and other doctors have been collecting cases which bear on this very point. I can tell you of certain cases which came under my own notice. Two twin Alsatians —at the age of thirty-five, one in Paris, the other in San Francisco— were both attacked simultaneously by rheumatic ophthalmia. Three years later, by acts of similar carelessness—one at Liverpool, the other at the Central Railway Station in New York—both received similar injuries on the right cheek, and ever afterwards bore a similar scar. Of another pair—these were natives of Jersey—one went for years to India, the other was a lawyer in London. At the age of fifty-five, not having met for more than a quarter of a century, on the same day, and at the same hour of the afternoon, both were found to have been buying old-fashioned champagne-glasses—one at a shop in Hamburg, the other at a shop in Inverness."

"But," interposed Mr. Barton, unable any longer to contain himself, "may not we poor priests be allowed to maintain in our folly that it is the likeness of the two souls which produces that of the bodies, instead of the reverse, as I gather that you suggest yourself?"

"I should," said Dr. Thistlewood, courteously, "be the last man in the world to attempt the refutation of the view which you put

forward. I was only speaking of facts. I was not even suggesting an explanation of them."

"I should imagine," said Mr. Barton, the spirit of opposition rising in him, "that even the facts were difficult to prove. I should like to ask you if there is a single pair of persons on record to whom you or your friends, on your own grounds of observation, would attribute absolute likeness, whether of mind or body?"

"I am so far," replied Dr. Thistlewood, apparently unconscious of Mr. Barton's militant tone, "from saying that such a case exists, that I should set it down as being, from the nature of things, impossible. If twins were alike at their birth, they would be differently situated afterwards, since no two bodies can be absolutely in the same place at once. They would be like two clocks side by side in the Greenwich Observatory, which, an attendant told me, kept pretty much the same time—that is to say, he added, if we allow for the difference of longitude."

This illustration produced a general laugh, and the subject of the twins lost itself among the general trivialities of the tea-table. Then came the time when the promised music was called for. Oswald opened the piano, and Miss Vivian and Mr. Barton retired to the other end of the room to select from a pile of music some duet suitable to the occasion.

"Will you take it to the piano?" said Miss Vivian, when such a piece was found. "And please ask for candles. It's dark in that corner. I'll come in another moment."

She turned away as she spoke, and going alone to a window, she seemed to have forgotten all else in contemplation of the gathering twilight, as she had done on another occasion, when Sir Rawlin prematurely left her. Mr. Barton meanwhile set himself down at the instrument, and ran his fingers over the keys, with a masterful and brilliant touch which, he could not help feeling, gave an additional point to his recent attacks on Dr. Thistlewood. Dr. Thistlewood himself, who was watching Miss Vivian closely, gradually approached, though he did not attempt to join her.

"Nest, my dear," said Lady Susannah, presently, "come, we are all waiting for you."

But the girl seemed not to hear, and her conduct was just beginning to excite general attention, when Dr. Thistlewood moved quickly towards her, and contrived to give the impression that what detained her was a conversation with himself.

"You are wanting to go to sleep," he said, slightly pinching her wrist. "Blink your eyes, look at me. Wake up. You are rested."

Her face at once recovered its usual aspect. "What!" she said.

"Are they waiting? I beg everybody's pardon." And hastening to the piano, she stationed herself at Mr. Barton's side.

The piece they had selected for performance was recognized by every one from the first preliminary chords that sounded at Mr. Barton's touch. "Oh for the wings of a dove!"—it was a cry that appeals to all. Even Lady Conway was moved. In the exquisite tenor of Mr. Barton's voice she recognized a treasure which would be invaluable at her own small concerts; and the girl, when to this tenor she joined her clear soprano, seemed to be lifted from her lassitude on the wings of her own voice, and be borne by them far away towards the wilderness of desired rest.

"The clergyman's singing," said Lord Cotswold to Mr. Carlton, "is magnificent. He interests me. Every muscle of his face is tense with feeling still. He wants her to sing again; but she won't. She has gone back to Thistlewood."

"I wanted," Dr. Thistlewood was saying to her, "to ask if you happen to have any relations in Italy?"

"No," she said. "What makes you ask?"

"You remind me," he replied, "of some one I once met at Siena, who was, I think, married to an Italian. In some ways, though not in others, the likeness is very curious, though nobody would be likely to mistake one of you for the other. I was wondering whom you reminded me of, when I met you first at the mesmerist's."

"I hope," said Miss Vivian, with an indifferent smile, "that she was nice. I was never in Italy myself. I only wish I had been. I have looked at it so often from Mentone. See—we've disturbed Mr. Barton. Why has he left off singing?"

"My dear Mr. Barton," said Lord Cotswold, "accept my deepest thanks. My own piano and music-room—I have both—are as silent as the dust of Adam. Perhaps you will favour me one of these days by breathing into them a passing soul. And you, young lady," he went on, as he turned to Miss Vivian, "I've just been telling Mr. Barton that I too have a piano of my own. The ogre's castle is by this time fit to receive victims. I must get your aunt to beguile you into entering its dangerous precincts."

"Dr. Gustav, before you go," said Lady Conway, joining the group, "let me ask you if you know that, on this auspicious occasion, we have not only musicians amongst us, but also a sucking scientist. Behold him!" she went on, as she brought Mr. Hugo forward in a manner which vaguely suggested that she had hold of him by the collar. "He's been telling me all sorts of things about the sun and the earth's shadow; and he's going to reform humanity by manufacturing a new Adam—what is it out of, Mr. Hugo?—a mixture of glue and radium."

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, taking Mr. Hugo's hand, "I suppose she is thinking of radiobes. You and I are brothers in research—is that so? Only you have the advantage of me, for the future is the kingdom of the young. You must come and see me at Lord Cotswold's wonderful castle. We might hit on some bits of apparatus which perhaps you would find useful."

Mr. Hugo, who, under Lady Conway's drastic patronage, had hardly known whether to feel naughty or flattered, acknowledged this invitation with the broadest and most innocent of smiles.

"Well," said Lady Conway, "I must begin distributing my adieux. Good-bye, Miss Nest. I must kiss you, my dear. You have sung beautifully. Mr. Barton, we have not been introduced, so imagine that I am indulging in the presumption of praising you behind your back. Dr. Gustav, we shall meet later. I am dining at the Turkish Castle. Mr. Hugo, come here. Take me out to my carriage."

Thus the company departed, with the exception of Mr. Barton. He, under the pretext of desiring to find some music, managed to outstay the rest; and whilst he and Miss Vivian were jointly engaged in looking for it, the members of the family dispersed themselves, leaving him and her alone.

"Well," said Mr. Barton, looking at her with an air of reproachful friendliness, "and so the lecture has come and gone. I'm sure you are none the wiser for it. You certainly don't look happier—although one of its consequences has been a kiss from your new friend. Ah, that's the book I wanted. It's one of my own. Thank you very much, and good-bye. You sang just a little flat in two places, but it wasn't much."

"Are you," said Miss Vivian, "really in so great a hurry? Why do you look at me like that? What have I done that's dreadful?"

"It's nothing," said Mr. Barton, suspending his preparations for departure—"it's nothing that you've done personally."

"Oh," said the girl, "then there is something after all. Well, then, tell me—what have I done impersonally? Has the honour of Lady Conway's kiss done anything to unfit me for Confirmation?"

"Since you put it to me," said Mr. Barton, "I may as well speak honestly. Indeed, I have been longing to do so. I'm thinking of nothing that you've done. I'm thinking of something that seems to be going on round you. The atmosphere in which you live seems changing—growing less and less like that in which I would wish to see you live myself." He spoke with a new confidence born of his late experiences—his triumphs as a musician in the drawing-room, and a sense that he himself, whatever Dr. Thistlewood's technical knowledge, was fully capable of exposing

his childish fallacies as a philosopher. "Take Lord Cotswold," he proceeded. "Lord Cotswold may have fine qualities. There is something about him which suggests this; but he has led a tainted life. Take Lady Conway—this masterful London lady. Whatever her private conduct, she is of the world, worldly. I caught a jesting phrase of hers—something about the New Adam. A single phrase—a slight *nuance* of tone—will sometimes speak volumes. Sacred things for that woman are matter for a passing smile. But worse still is this doctor, with his wealth, and his melodramatic reputation, and his royal friends, and his *grand-seigneur* manners, and—let us admit it—his professional skill, and the fuss which such people as Lord Cotswold and Lady Conway make with him. All this does but make him the more dangerous; for, with regard to the deepest things—the things that alone matter—that man is a quack. That lecture of his—I tell you this candidly—I should several times have got up and left the room, if it had not been my wish to acquaint myself with the sort of thing you were being exposed to. Shall I tell you what the upshot of that man's lecture is? It is that we are not masters of our own wills—that we are not masters of our own moral characters; but that these are controlled for us by the behaviour of the nervous system, and the pulpy matter inside our skulls, over which we have no more control than we have over our own digestions. Weakness of the body may deprive the will of its implement; but not all the nerve-tackle in the world, or all the red blood, or all the grey brain-pulp, will ever dictate to us one single thought or affection, or any single will-act which is a choice between good or evil. Dr. Thistlewood may not say in so many words that the soul is of no importance, but he sinks it in the body. Body for him is everything; and if you want to see where that leads him, you may remember what he said about St. Paul."

"Do you know," said Miss Vivian, wearily, "that when you talk like this, you really rather put my back up. You treat me as if I were a baby. What possible harm could that very dry lecture do me? I'm sure I don't know what Dr. Thistlewood means. When he talked about St. Paul, he reminded me a little of Mr. Hugo; but he isn't silly like Mr. Hugo, at all events, who thinks that human beings can be made out of beef-tea."

"Forgive me," said Mr. Barton, half smiling. "I don't wish to affront you."

To his delight and astonishment, the girl held out her hand to him.

"No," she said, "it is you who have got to forgive *me*. It was quite wrong of me to be irritated. But I'm not perhaps in the best of spirits. There are so many things which you can tell me, and which I don't know, and which would help me. Why do you waste

your time in telling me things I do know? Whether I shall manage to save my own soul or not, neither you nor I can tell, but I'm not in the least danger of forgetting the fact that I have one; and that I, and I alone, am responsible for how my soul behaves itself."

"Hark!" said Mr. Barton. "Some one is coming. If I don't see you before, you will hear me preach on Sunday the first of my Confirmation sermons. Fancy, when you hear me, that I am talking to you personally. I shall deal with the very points which I have in my mind now. I only long to help you.—Ah, Mr. Carlton, I and my fellow-performer have been looking for one of my music-books. We've found the truant, and I must be off."

CHAPTER IX

"I'm glad," said Lord Cotswold, "that you thought, as we went away, of asking the young scientist to come in after dinner. What will that boy be thinking—what will men of science be thinking—what will the world be thinking—when he is as old as I am?"

Dr. Thistlewood shrugged his shoulders. "Darwin," he said, "set a stone rolling, the course of which was beyond his own wildest conjecture."

The speakers were standing together in front of a large fireplace, the arch of which was like the entrance to a mosque. Above it, wreathed in arabesques, was a clock with Turkish numerals, whose hands were about to register the hour of half-past eight. The room to which this fireplace belonged, large and finely proportioned, was tawdry, even in the dim lamplight, with tarnished colours and gilding. With its blue ceiling, on which glimmered yellow crescents, and its mirrors, whose red and green frames culminated in horse-shoe curves, it was not unlike some cigar-divan, or so-called "Oriental café"—the haunt of the *jeunesse dorée* of a great commercial town. The curtains, however, the modern carpet, and the solid and comfortable furniture—all supplied on hire by an enterprising firm in Southquay—brought the whole into reasonable harmony with the common demands of life.

"It's a pity," said Lord Cotswold, "that Rawlin was not able to come. The charming guest we are waiting for had once upon a time a *tendresse* for him."

"Who," said a voice in the doorway, eclipsing that of a servant—"who had a *tendresse* for whom, if I may ask an indiscreet question?" The questioner was Lady Conway.

"We were talking," said Lord Cotswold, "of Rawlin. He's speechifying to-night, or he'd be here."

"Ah," said Lady Conway, carelessly, "women began early with Rawlin; and I don't feel sure that they've quite done with him yet. He began with the old. He's now trying the young."

"The power of exciting the love of even an experienced man," said Lord Cotswold, ignoring any personal innuendo in this speech, "may exist in a young girl just as well as in the most accomplished

woman. The reason is that what a man loves in a woman is no one of the qualities which he would value in a mere human being, as such —I mean such qualities as intellect, sound judgment, knowledge, or even complete respectability. These may be his own possession. Any male friend may possess them. What he loves in a woman is a something for ever outside himself—the mystery of all the horizons, the mystery of the Feminine in the universe. In the feminine organisms, as our friend Dr. Gustav would say, which are fit to hold it, this mystery is like wine trembling in ever fresh vessels, and ever fresh itself from the eternal vine. What does it matter whether the vessel was made this week or the week before, when what sparkles at its brim is older than all the existing stars? The magic in a young girl's eyes is as old as the summer sea, just as the summer sea is as young as a young girl's eyes."

In the dining-room Lady Conway looked up from her soup. "You always," she said to her host, "had a cook above the common. I'm a better judge of the Masculine, making stock in his own kitchen, than I am of the Eternal Feminine making a macedoine of grapes out of the universe. So unless we are like the poet Anacreon, and are absolutely unable to sing about anything except love, suppose you were to tell me a little something about your travels—you and Dr. Gustav. He's almost as practical as I am."

The two travellers accordingly began upon this fertile subject, Lady Conway, who had been round the world herself, comparing her own experiences with theirs.

"By the way," she said, as dinner was drawing to a conclusion, "do you know whom I met at Calcutta? Charlie Galton. You remember that waist he cultivated. Well, he's now the shape of a football. As soon as I saw him I understood how that scented wife of his, with her bangles, her roaming eyes, and her necklace of tiger's-claws, had so often, and at such uncanonical hours, a certain grey horse standing at the door of her bungalow."

"Who," said Dr. Thistlewood, stopping her, "is the poet Anacreon now? It's just the same with all of you. Who is in love with whom? Your conversation is always coming back to that. What does it matter? You might just as well talk about who gave whom the measles."

"Not at all," said Lady Conway. "I'm a philosopher myself in my own way, though I don't talk about universes; and I'm amused by seeing the follies that women can make men commit—or, rather, I should say, bring out, for the foolishness was in the men before."

"Oh," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that amuses you, does it? No woman, you say, could force a man into follies, unless these were already in harmony with the man's general nature. That, as I gather, is the philosophy which forms the basis of your amusement. Well,

I've been trying some experiments which bear on this amusing question. Indeed, I had been arranging to amuse you after dinner by showing you one—not on yourself, so you needn't feel the least alarmed. If I could I would have shown it at my lecture."

Unable to guess what he meant, Lady Conway turned away from him.

"Tell me, Lord Cotswold," she said, "who built this madman's house? And what on earth made you take it?"

"An Anglo-Indian," replied Lord Cotswold, "built it. As to my taking it, I won't tell you my reasons. Dr. Gustav shall show them to you after dinner, and perhaps something else besides."

At this moment the dining-room door opened, and a voice out of the shadow announced "Mr. Hugo Arundel."

"My dear young friend," said Lord Cotswold, rising to meet him, "I'm delighted to see you. I hope my carriage came for you in good time. Sit between me and Dr. Thistlewood. He's going, after dinner, to give us a little experiment. He has many things that will interest you. He has an apparatus for taking moving photographs. No doubt you're a photographer yourself. You might do us all by limelight."

Lady Conway looked at him with a confidential and laughing eye. "Not me, Mr. Hugo," she said. "I strictly forbid that."

Mr. Hugo, meanwhile, who had refused various dainties for fear he should seem like a child had down for dessert, condescended in a manly way to sip at a glass of port, and looked ready to be pleased with, and also to explain everything.

"Dodson," said Lord Cotswold to a servant, whom he summoned with a small hand-bell, "have all the lamps been lighted? Well, then, Lady Conway, you shall see why I took this house."

From the gaudy drawing-room, in which they had assembled before dinner, they passed on to a great circular saloon, decorated in the same style, but more barely furnished, and having in it a grand piano. The windows opened into a conservatory, the floor of which, on a lower level, was reached by a flight of steps. Lady Conway descended into this, and saw that, along the face of the house, the structure extended itself in the form of a glazed gallery. At the end of the gallery—for she was determined to see everything—she discovered a room in a tower, with a balcony that overlooked the sea. Ash-trays and match-boxes showed that it was designed for smokers.

"Lord Cotswold," she said, when they all had regained the music-room, "I'm a convert to your taste already. That place was made for lovers. You positively ought to give a party."

"Precisely," said Lord Cotswold, "and have the priest to play—a small party, for, in Lent, he wouldn't come to a large one. It's

the very thing I've been contemplating. Before you go I must consult you about it. But first let us finish our explorations."

He opened, as he spoke, a pair of tall vermilion doors, which admitted them to a wide passage, carpetless, bare, and echoing.

"Here," he said, "I shall hand you over to our friend. I took this house, not for the sake of the lovers—though I hope we shall have many of them—but because it enabled me to provide him with a separate kingdom of his own. He means, when I leave, to continue as its king, on his own account."

When they reached the end of this passage, doors were again opened.

"Now," said Dr. Thistlewood to Lady Conway, "will you favour me by walking in? And will you favour me also with your opinion on what you see?"

Lady Conway looked blankly round her. "My first opinion is," she said, "that I have got into the reading-room of a Mechanics' Institute. My second is that I want to get to the fire."

The gaunt room or hall, in which they were now standing, was illuminated by naked gas-jets, which emphasized its general bleakness. The floor was covered with coarse cocoa-nut matting. The tables were of white deal. Against the walls were some unornamental cupboards, some photographs of human figures, obviously taken for scientific rather than for artistic purposes; and, alternating with these, were mysterious anatomical diagrams. At one end was something in the shape of a tall wardrobe, draped with curtains; and at the other, partially hidden by black cloths thrown over them, were a large gramophone, and other sets of apparatus, which made fitful glimmerings with their polished brass and mahogany.

"Dr. Gustav," said Lady Conway, suddenly, with an accent of slight alarm, "you don't mean to tell me that you've opened a private hospital."

Dr. Thistlewood looked at her with an air of provoking gravity. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "My patients are not infectious. Indeed, I have only one—an old servant of our host's, on whom I am keeping an eye; and her malady is so far from dangerous, that she may possibly outlive us all. It is, however, quite true that, as soon as our host departs, I shall take this as a home of rest for a certain class of invalids. I have fitted up several rooms for their future accommodation already. There's my gramophone. It will re-utter my patients' confessions for me; and those other implements are for registering their pulses, their breathing, and their temperatures when in various mental conditions, and for taking and exhibiting moving photographs of them at critical stages in their careers."

"This monster," said Lady Conway to Lord Cotswold, "is

making me quite uncomfortable. What is it that he really does here? Is this a dissecting-room? And does he vivisect babies? And have you tucked him away in this outhouse so that no one may hear their cries?"

"No," said Dr. Thistlewood. "I don't vivisect babies. I should like to vivisect criminals of a certain class, instead of sending them to the gallows or the electric chair. But why cry for the moon? Luckily, Nature helps us. She gives us the vivisection of disease, especially brain-disease. Also we have hypnotism, which is a kind of vivisection in disguise, and which sentimentalists don't attack because they don't yet understand it. But all this is dull for you. Let us go back to common life. You said at dinner that when women made fools of men, they were only drawing out the folly that was latent in the men already."

"My dear man," said Lady Conway, "you mustn't take me *au pied de la lettre* like that. No doubt, as you more than once have taken occasion to tell me, I often talk a very great deal of nonsense."

"At all events," said Dr. Thistlewood, "in that particular piece of nonsense, you suggested a very reasonable question. You remember the mesmerist whose performances you just missed. She had, of course, been doing the usual tricks—making various people do a variety of ludicrous things, which they wouldn't have done had they been in their normal senses, and of having done which they were afterwards quite unconscious. Well, there you've got something which, as every doctor knows, is as easy and commonplace as the feat of a schoolboy who, for a practical joke, should make another schoolboy sick by putting an emetic in his tea. A hypnotist can control the actions of eight people out of ten, to some extent. That's admitted on all sides. But a certain school of investigators —doctors and others—contend that this power is limited in a peculiar and most impressive way. A hypnotized person, they say, can be made to do anything, no matter how contrary to his normal judgment and proclivities, with one startling exception. He can never be made to do anything morally wrong."

A bashful inclination to speak was here manifested by Mr. Hugo. Lord Cotswold at once encouraged him, and Mr. Hugo brought forth his wisdom.

"If," he said, still shy, yet rejoicing in his own temerity, "no hypnotized person can be made to do what is wrong, everything done by a hypnotized person must be right. So if you wanted to find out whether a thing was wrong or right, you would only have to hypnotize somebody, and see if he could be made to do it."

"Bravo, Mr. Hugo!" said Lady Conway, laughing. "Mesmerize your Aunt Susannah, and tell her to elope with a bishop. If she does, the bishop will know that she still is an honest woman. Or

mesmerize Oswald, and tell him to elope with me—he knows that I'm deeply attached to him; and if only he's safely mesmerized at the time when he does the deed, we shall both of us be comfortably sure that we have no need of repentance. Look here, Dr. Gustav, do you happen to have a pin about you? I see that this rose in the front of my dress is loose. It's only an artificial one. I wear it for the sake of modesty rather than ornament."

"Do you," said Dr. Thistlewood, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him, "mind waiting a moment? I must be going out of the room in a minute or two, and when I come back I will bring you one. Well, our young friend here has made an excellent criticism. If a hypnotized person can be made to do nothing wrong, we've an instrument ready to our hands for solving all cases of casuistry. Unfortunately, we are not so blest. One of the very writers who has urged this view most elaborately, happens to allude in his book to the well-known case of a boy—a gentle, excellent boy, who when in a condition brought on, not by hypnosis, but by a seizure, committed a most atrocious murder, of which afterwards in his normal state he had no knowledge or memory. If conscience can be overturned by epilepsy, it's idle to pretend that it must necessarily be immune to the influences of hypnotism. Still," Dr. Thistlewood continued—"Lady Conway, I hope I'm not boring you—if we are content to mean by conscience merely some disposition or habit ingrained in the subject's system, it may often in various ways be able to resist suggestion—just as stupidity would; for no hypnotist could hypnotize a dunce into a Bacon. Everything is a question of degree. The truth is that the degree to which hypnotized subjects are plastic under the influence of suggestion differs in different cases; and we can't arrive at any general conclusions except by careful experiments on a number of typical subjects. It may amuse you to see the way in which a test can be made, since you are, as you truly say of yourself, a thoroughly practical woman. So if you'll excuse me for a moment, I'll make my short preparations; and my young friend here, if he likes to do so, shall come with me. Lady Conway, you needn't look at me as if I were going to take one of your teeth out. Come, Mr. Hugo Arundel, would you like to inspect the preliminaries?"

Mr. Hugo, who had been alternately contemplating the scientific pictures on the walls, and listening to Dr. Thistlewood with a vaguely gleeful sense that what the great man was saying would be distasteful to Mr. Barton, responded to this summons with the air of a proud disciple.

"That picture which I see catches your eye," said Dr. Thistlewood, as they went together towards a farther door, "is a curious little animal magnified. We'll have it down, and look at it when we come back."

"What's he going to do?" said Lady Conway, when she and Lord Cotswold were left alone together. "Your talk about your travels was much more amusing than this."

"This," said Lord Cotswold, laying a hand on her arm—for he still retained something of the demeanour of a man of gallantry—"is only another form of travelling. It is travelling in the world of knowledge; and at present it has this advantage, that it is not travelling in a crowd. You asked me for my traveller's impressions," he went on abruptly. "The more rapid and easy the act of travel becomes, and the more our own civilization is diffusing itself throughout the remotest regions, the more vividly does travel on myself produce one great impression, which is this—that the earth is no bigger than some small balloon's small car, over whose wicker sides we peer into the homeless gulfs around us; but the fact that this infinite space supports us and buoys us up, fanning our cheeks, and touching the very roots of our hair, makes us feel we live by forces compared with which this world is nothing. My dear friend, pending the arrival of Dr. Gustav's pin, let me rearrange your rose for you, which seems in danger of falling."

Lord Cotswold made the rearrangement a pretext for certain attentions which some women would have resented, but which Lady Conway submitted to indifferently with a faint sarcastic smile. This tender scene had been not completed for very long before Dr. Thistlewood returned, and Mr. Hugo with him. Mr. Hugo's face and gait exhibited the happy importance of a boy who has just been promoted from a jacket to a coat with tails.

"Now," said Dr. Thistlewood, genially, "while we wait for a few minutes, we'll amuse Lady Conway by showing her a pretty picture—the one which my young friend was looking at when we went out. I'll take it down from the wall, and then we shall see it better. Now, Lady Conway, what should you say that this is?"

"I'm sure I don't know," she replied, rather impatiently. "It looks like a spider's-web, with a lot of little spiders stuck in it. But you, no doubt, have some long and learned name for it."

"Pretty well," said Dr. Thistlewood, laughing. "It's a little animal which is called Microgamia Socialis. Come, Mr. Arundel, we'll put it on this table. Each of these little blotches is a living animal by itself; but they are all tied together, so as to have a common life, by what looks like a spider's-web, but is really a system of nerves. That's a rude illustration of how we are made ourselves. We are, each of us, a number of life-centres; and what we each feel ourselves to be results from the manner in which these centres are tied together."

Mr. Hugo looked at the picture with eager and delighted eyes. "I quite understand," he said. "They are something like the

radiobes, which I hope I may be able to show you in my bottle."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Lady Conway with a gasp. "What have we got here?"

Mr. Hugo turned round with a calm, superior smile. As for the Microgamia Socialis, Lady Conway had quite forgotten it. What attracted her attention was the entrance of a female domestic—a pallid woman with an amiable but strained expression, who proceeded to dust the chairs in a very business-like manner, till she came to the group near the fireplace, when a singular thing happened. Pausing in front of Lady Conway, and looking, not at her face, but at a point about ten inches below it, she quietly plucked from its place the wearer's artificial rose and, retiring a little, began to smell it. Lady Conway was in the act of making a horrified gesture of protest; but Dr. Thistlewood, seizing her wrist, checked her.

"Don't mind that," he said. "Madame Levy does that daily. Just stop quiet and listen. Sarah Davies, tell me—where did you find that flower?"

The woman looked slightly puzzled. "It was floating," she said, "in the air, sir, just in front of the fireplace, as if it was hanging by a bit of string or a cobweb."

"How many people," said Dr. Thistlewood, "do you see now in this room?"

"I see three, sir," said the woman; "yourself, his lordship, and another—a very young gentleman."

"You don't see a lady, do you?"

"No, sir," said the woman, looking round. "I don't see no lady, nowhere."

"At the end of the room," said Dr. Thistlewood, "is a cupboard with a curtain drawn across it. Just pull that curtain aside, please. You will find Mrs. Markham, his lordship's late housekeeper, who tried to get you into trouble, hiding there."

The woman obeyed the order, and presently exposed to view a life-sized lay-figure or doll draped in female clothing.

"Do you," said Dr. Thistlewood, "see anybody trying to hide there? You do? Very good. Who is it?"

"Mrs. Markham, sir, who used to be housekeeper."

Dr. Thistlewood pointed to one of the deal tables, on which were standing a tumbler and a bottle of water.

"Sarah," he said, "go over to that table. I've an order to give you presently. Now, Lady Conway, watch. This is a woman who ordinarily would not hurt a fly." He went to the table, and poured some water into the tumbler. "Sarah," he said, "take this, and be careful how you hold it. In that tumbler is oil of vitriol. You know what oil of vitriol is. If it touches your skin, it burns it

exactly as a hot fire would. If it touches your eyes, it makes them blind for ever. The quantity you have in that glass, if thrown over a woman, would kill her. Are you quite aware of that?"

"Yes, sir," said the woman, holding the tumbler gingerly. "I am quite aware of that."

"Very well, then," said Dr. Thistlewood, "without spilling a drop, go over to Mrs. Markham, and throw the whole of it in her face."

Keeping the tumbler away from her, and moving with extravagant caution, whilst Mr. Hugo watched her with a highly critical smile, the woman crossed the room, and dashed the water with a jerk in the face of the lay-figure.

"Thank you," said Dr. Thistlewood. "You have burnt her up to ashes. There's nobody in the cupboard now. Look—Mrs. Markham's gone."

"Yes, sir," said the woman; "there's nobody in the cupboard now."

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that's a good riddance. You've done for her. And now, Sarah, you will go to bed at once. You will sleep quite soundly; in nine hours you will wake, and you won't have the least remembrance of having been in this room to-night."

When the door had closed, Dr. Thistlewood turned to Lady Conway.

"Come," he said. "What's the matter? Would you like a little glass of brandy? You look as pale as if you had seen a ghost, or as if you took me for a necromancer armed with some diabolic powers. You might just as well take me for a necromancer if I put you to sleep with chloral. That woman, who is very easily hypnotized, was, when she came into the room, quite unable to see you, because I told her that she would see in it nobody but three gentlemen; but she saw that flower of yours, because I told her that she would see a rose, and that when she saw it she was to take it. Do you think that miraculous, or even what you would call uncanny? My dear lady, consider. You don't see one-half of the things that are in this room yourself. And why don't you see them? Simply because you don't attend to them. The hypnotist, by means of suggestion, is able to produce an artificial and intensified inattention to certain things which he specifies. But it doesn't always require hypnotism to do even as much as this. Once or twice, when I've had the privilege of walking with you in Hyde Park, I've noticed that a number of ladies were totally invisible to yourself. I know a lady, indeed, whose very beautiful cousin, with peculiar auburn hair, was never seen by her for years, though she stood five feet ten in her stockings, for the simple reason that she had appropriated this lady's admirer."

"Oh," said Lady Conway, incautiously, "you call her beautiful, do you? Dr. Gustav, you're a fool. You're getting tiresome, and I'm going to say good night."

"Instead of that," said Lord Cotswold, "come back into more comfortable quarters. We still have my party to talk about."

"And I," said Dr. Thistlewood, when they found themselves again in the drawing-room, "will try to put her into a more comfortable frame of mind. You've just seen some things," he continued, "which to your thinking are odd. Well, it's odd that a drunkard sees snakes in his boots; it's odd that a knock on the head makes a man see stars. The things which you've just seen are only more odd than these because they illustrate facts which have never, till lately, been reduced to a system."

"I don't," said Lady Conway, "like your experiments one little bit. You were much nicer when you were putting us together, instead of taking us to pieces. And now let us come to our senses, and talk about Lord Cotswold's party. He must have it on Monday or Tuesday, for on Wednesday I'm going back to London."

"Well," said Lord Cotswold, "we'll try and manage Monday. On Sunday—to-morrow—if the hour is not ruinous to digestion, Dr. Gustav and I are going to hear Mr. Barton preach. I saw it announced in one of the Southquay papers that he is going to deliver the first of a series of sermons on Confirmation."

CHAPTER X

SUNDAY morning came, and the air was full again of the sound of distant bells, which stole through the draperies of Miss Vivian's half-open window. Yesterday afternoon, till the latest possible moment, she had waited for the sound of another bell which might have announced Sir Rawlin's coming. But she waited in vain. Sir Rawlin, to say the truth, had begun at the lecture to resent Lady Conway's interference. Her advice, as she gave it, though he realized its substantial wisdom, was, so he felt, developing into a foolish joke; and he resolved that, by avoiding Cliff's End for a day or two, he would deprive her of all excuse for reproducing it.

Exhausted by disappointment, Miss Vivian had risen late, and had given up all idea of being present at morning service. Nothing relieved her depression but a short letter from Mr. Barton, posted the previous night. Mr. Barton, at all events, was faithful and did not forget her.

"I could not," so he wrote, "express in your aunt's drawing-room what I wanted to say to you about the relation between soul and body. Remember that in my sermon to-morrow evening I shall have these matters in view. I trust that you will be there; and I do so for the special reason that my next private talk with you may have to be put off for a little. In a group of poor cottages between the Turkish Castle and the golf-course there has been an outbreak of some illness. The doctor is not yet certain about it; but if it spreads and proves to be serious, I may be occupied in ministering to the sick. So the needs of the body meet us, you see, everywhere."

As she sat before the looking-glass, while her maid put the last touches to her toilette, a sadness in her face reminded her of an over-intimate diary, which her pride forbade her to expose to the scrutiny of other people. Suddenly she made an effort. She asked for her newest hat, with its broad brim and its curving wave of feathers, committed her hands carefully to a delicate pair of gloves, and set out to meet her family, who by this time would be coming back from church. The slight frou-frou of her skirts, in

some incongruous way, joined itself in the business of sustaining her to her consciousness of Mr. Barton's sympathy; and before she discerned the eminently Sunday-like figures of her aunt and Mr. Carlton advancing slowly across a field, she was ready to meet them with an almost elaborate gaiety.

In a correct and subdued fashion Mr. Carlton was gay himself. "My dear Nest," he said, "such music in church—such positively divine music! But if you were tired, you were quite right not to come. Well, you're rested now. Look at her. She's as fresh as paint."

"Thank you," said Miss Vivian. "The paint is only just put on."

"Naughty!" said Mr. Carlton, as he raised a reproving finger. "But listen—we've got some news for you. While you were having your beauty-sleep, a letter came to Susie from Lord Cotswold, asking us all to go to an impromptu party to-morrow night as ever is. Mr. Barton, whom we saw just for a moment—he has been asked also—specially asked to give us some sacred music. And you, Miss Minx—you too have your part cut out for you. Mr. Barton inquired about that, and said that, as the party was small, he would go and play your accompaniments."

To the girl this news came as a fresh stimulus; and, as often happens when spirits are artificial, her task was now to restrain rather than to maintain hers. She was even able that afternoon in the schoolroom to indulge gallantly in a laughing encounter with Mr. Hugo, who, having suppressed himself somewhat in the chastening presence of his aunt, now indulged in a postponed exhibition of high and majestic seriousness. With a furrowed brow, as though the fate of nations depended on him, he was examining some tweezers, which formed part of his scientific appliances.

"Well, Mr. Hugo," said Miss Vivian, "tell us about your last night's adventures."

"Yes," said Miss Arundel. "Did they give you some nice dessert?"

Mr. Hugo, without looking at them, smiled a superior smile. "Dr. Thistlewood and I," he said, "were trying a few experiments." Here dropping his tweezers and making a portentous grimace, he succeeded in affixing to one of his eyes a magnifying-glass of the kind used by watchmakers. He took his bottle from a shelf, and examined its contents critically. "Ah," he said, "it is just as I knew it would be. Several nuclei have formed themselves and are visible already. Dr. Thistlewood was much interested when I told him of the nature of my work."

"And when," said Miss Vivian, "is a little Mr. Hugo going to pop out of the top of your bottle?"

"Nest," said Mr. Hugo, advancing, "do you at all know how you are made up yourself? I'll show you by a drawing. Look—this is a portrait of one of your ancestors. He is called Microgamia Socialis; and he is simply an organic association of so many separate lives. That's how you are made up, and I just as much as you. You are you, and I am I, and Nina is Nina, merely because these lives—these little things like bugs—are tied together in each of us in rather different ways. And," Mr. Hugo proceeded, "by the methods of hypnosis, by the production of the somnambulistic state, and stimulative or inhibitive suggestion, one qualified person can untie these lives in another person, and tie them in a new knot, so that the person becomes quite different, and then one puts him all back again. I incline to believe that, when I was operating last night with Dr. Thistlewood, I must have put Lady Conway unintentionally into a rather peculiar psychopathic state, for she told us all, quite out, that she was very much in love with Oswald."

"What!" ejaculated Oswald, blushing with indignant delight. "What's that nonsense? If Lady Conway had said such a thing, which of course she didn't, a true man of the world would never think of repeating what a woman let fall by accident. You baby, Hugo."

Mr. Hugo, who had intended, when he spoke, to impress his brother by the important nature of his communication, now shifted his ground with considerable mental agility.

"When the normal interaction of the cerebral centres is perturbed," he said, "the patient often utters the reverse of what he or she feels. It was the absurdity of the statement, my dear Oswald, not the possible truth of it, which induced me to quote it as a sign that Lady Conway's condition was abnormal."

He might have said more had it not been for the conduct of Miss Vivian, who here burst into a fit of uncontrolled laughter.

"Hugo," she said, "please go on. Give us a little more. You and your brain-centres are really too delightful. Who else is Lady Conway in love with? She was very parsimonious if she only mentioned Oswald."

Mr. Hugo raised his eyebrows till they almost touched his hair, and moved disdainfully towards the door.

"One might," he said as he opened it, "be almost tempted to think, when one hears you laugh like that, that you, Nest, were the victim of some cerebral instability yourself, and that the cells, the neurons, or the ganglia of common-sense had disappeared from the area of your consciousness."

Mr. Barton, meanwhile, was at the same hour giving to his evening sermon a careful and last revision. One of Miss Vivian's utterances had constantly kept recurring to him, "Whether I

shall save my soul or no, neither you can tell, nor I." He also remembered her gently mocking question, "Has the honour of Lady Conway's kiss done anything to unfit me for Confirmation?" There seemed to him in these words to be a sort of tragic flippancy, like that of a child straying along the brink of a precipice; and he was conscious, as he thought of her, of a quasi-maternal longing to throw his arms about her, and drag her back into safety. But though she was the focus of his solicitude, his solicitude went far beyond her. For him she became the image of all youth, and in the vaguely insidious influences which seemed to be now surrounding her, he saw the image of all temptations. The chief of these temptations for him were not those of the flesh. They were those, far more subtle, of a mental tone and temper, which, seducing the soul into moral and spiritual indifference, left it a prey to temptations of all other kinds. Such influences, old as the world itself, had never, he felt, taken a more malignant form than of the semi-materialistic cant which, even when, as in Dr. Thistlewood's case, it shrank from the absurdity of denying that the soul existed, reduced its responsibility to a mere vanishing point by maintaining that most of its behaviour was determined for it by the idiosyncracies of its mortal body. Such was the tenour of his reflections; and when he reflected as a philosopher on the merely intellectual crudity which betrayed itself in so many phrases in Dr. Thistlewood's lecture, and still more plainly perhaps in the naïve arrogance of his conversation, he felt equally able to encounter him from the pulpit and at Lord Cotswold's party.

CHAPTER XI

That evening the church was crowded, the congregation comprising an unusual number of men. Miss Vivian's overstrained spirits, when she had done with her cousins, had deserted her. Mr. Hugo's science, and Oswald's boyish romance, became like a comedy which had wholly lost its savour, and coming back again sadly to the realities of her own condition, she had looked forward, with a sense at once of rest and excitement, to the sound of Mr. Barton's voice. To her it seemed, when she entered the sacred building, that the whole congregation was pervaded by an expectation similar to her own. Lord Cotswold was present, with Dr. Thistlewood next him, occupying observable places, and both conspicuously grave.

Before the service began, the whole church was in half obscurity, through which the voice of the organ throbbed. Then the chancel grew starry, as though its lights were seen through tears; and amongst its lights came a flicker of the white advancing choir, followed by the stoled priests. The notes of the voluntary died away and ended; and, the nave and aisles being not yet fully illuminated, a hymn was sung in which the choir alone joined. The sound, almost unearthly, performed the office of an incantation, calling all that was spiritual from the depths of the human heart. This effect was maintained till a second hymn brought the liturgy to a close, when the nave was again darkened, and two lights, unlit before, were seen shining at a certain elevation in the neighbourhood of the chancel arch. Then expectation deepened. These were the lights of the pulpit, and presently they were illuminating a face which the mystical and clairvoyant eyes could not save from being stern, and but just saved from being threatening.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" This was Mr. Barton's text, which thrilled through the tense silence. He was, he said, going to address himself more directly to those younger members of his congregation, who before long were to be confirmed. But the truth he was about to insist upon did not concern the young only. It was equally vital to every man and woman who heard him.

The object of Confirmation, just like that of the Lord's Supper, was to convey to the recipient, from a source outside himself, some strength which would enable him to realize the one true end of his existence. Of the particular kind of strength given to the recipient by Confirmation, it would be his duty to speak hereafter. This evening he would invite them only to consider the more general question of why any such gift of extraneous strength was important to us.

"We are all of us human beings," he said, "before we become Christians. Let us ask ourselves, therefore, what this nature of ours, common to us as human beings, is, to which the Church offers her sacraments, and which gives those sacraments their meaning." In our present state of existence we were, he said, composite creatures, made up of soul and body. He would deal with the body first. That in itself was a composite thing also. We each of us bore witness to this fact every moment, in speaking, as we are obliged to do, of the different bodily parts of us—my hands, my arms, my legs, my feet, and so forth. The body was composite, not only in the sense that we could separate its parts in thought, but also in the sense that some of its parts could be amputated without destroying it; whilst if other parts ceased to operate, the whole would be destroyed and lost. In what, then, so far as any one of us was concerned, did the practical unity of the living body consist? There was no one part, even amongst those commonly called vital, in which any one could for a moment maintain that the living unity centered itself. The heart, for example, would be lifeless without the head, the head without the heart. The human unity of all these various parts consisted in their common relation to a single living self. This arm, this foot, this tongue—each belongs to me, because to me, who am separate from each of them, they all severally minister. "I am," said Mr. Barton, "merely repeating here the truth with which the child starts, and with which the philosopher ends. And now," he continued, his voice slightly rising, "let us turn from this body, which is mine, to the self—or let us say the soul—which is me."

As soon as we did this, he said, we were confronted by a momentous contrast, which only failed to overwhelm us because it was so self-evident and familiar. The body could be divided into its component parts by thought; everybody was ultimately so divided, in fact. But the soul—the self—was, even in thought, indivisible. "To-day," he said, "I may have two eyes. To-morrow I may have plucked out one. I may seek God to-day. To-morrow I may have turned away from Him. Everything in me may change—everything but I myself. It is the same I—the same enduring centre, that loves, suffers, sins, prays, is blind, sees. And this I, this self,

this soul, being thus simple and indivisible, is for that reason, in its very nature, indestructible. It would be out of place here to quote to you the supreme thinkers, from Plato to Descartes, who have been awe-stricken by this fundamental truth. I will only say, adding my voice to theirs, 'Show me the man who can think the annihilation of self, and I will hail him as a new Omnipotence, who could create all the stars of heaven.' We did not ask to be; but, having once been, we can never again not be—even though the mountains should fall on us, and the sea vainly cover us.

"We may well, each of us, say," he continued, after a long pause, 'What a fearful thing the existence of myself is!' Amongst the weary toils and troubles that come upon us every day, we find comfort in the thought of our pillows, with their gift of soft forgetfulness, or to the peace of resignation which will be ours on abandoning some hopeless struggle. But, in the deeper sense of the words, we shall rest from ourselves—never. Self lies upon self like an ever-living coal of fire. It is indeed an overwhelming thing to think that I shall be I always—that I can never divide myself from myself. And," Mr. Barton continued, "the matter does not end here." The self, he said, must not only remain what it is through an eternity of present moments; but it drags its past after it, like a trail from which it never can free itself, and its past is being fulfilled for ever in the qualities of its eternal present. Yes, he said, but even now we had not the whole case before us. Besides being burdened with the past which we call our own, we were burdened also with that of our first ancestor. We all of us, like him, were born desiring peace. We all of us, through his perverse weakness, had lost the power of gaining it. Thus the natural man unaided was, in the very fact of being a man, his own house of torment from which there was no escape.

Here, Mr. Barton went on, we had the general explanation of what the Sacrament of Confirmation did for us. It miraculously resuscitated in us certain powers which had been lost. Of all this he would speak more explicitly in future sermons. He would confine himself now to a fundamental question which underlay it, namely, what in their essence these powers, which required resuscitation, were. They might be described very shortly. They were the powers essential to the integrity of the moral character; and Christ made good the loss which the first Adam has transmitted to us, by giving us, as the second Adam, this lost character back again, providing us with a model for our imitation, and His continual aid in imitating it. All the Sacraments of the Church had, for their ultimate object, the production of the Christ-like character. "Or," said Mr. Barton, "to bring the matter to a finer point—and this is the point to which all along I have been leading you—their object is

so to redeem and revivify the human will, which is the master of the intellect and the affections, that it shall operate in accordance with the will of the Divine Man, our Saviour. It is only through the exercise of the will, thus mercifully revivified, that you and I can render our own eternal existence not a terror or a burden to us, but a blessedness—a blessedness which, though passing our understandings, is divined dimly by each of us. 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come.' Well," exclaimed the preacher, "might a great poet, who was also a great thinker, say that this human will of ours is the main miracle of existence—

> "'The living will which shall endure
> When all that seems shall suffer shock,'

and endure with you and with me, for weal or woe, eternally.

"Perhaps I shall be told," he went on, "for the spirit of science is abroad, that I am here encroaching on a science that is called psychology, this being a study of the body through whose mechanism the soul here operates; and I shall be challenged to explain how we Christians acquire any right to speak about it. Christ, so far as we know, delivered no scientific lectures; but all the psychology, whether new or old, which concerns men practically, in relation either to soul or body, is to be found in Christ's teaching. First, as to the body; and a very few words will be enough. If any one thinks that Christ, teaching us through the Church, treats the body with too much contempt, he need but consider the following familiar facts. It was through the medium of the body that the Redemption of the world was accomplished. The human body is the medium of the great sacramental mysteries. By the touch of water on our foreheads we become members of Christ. Through our bodily mouths He comes to us in the Holy Eucharist. Our bodies play their parts in the great mystery of marriage. The powers and graces conferred by Confirmation and Ordination come to us from God through the impact of a bishop's hands. Ordination, Baptism, and Confirmation we shall here find specially significant, for these sacraments can be administered once only to each of us. The tissues of the body are in a state of constant change, and yet their virtue is such that they are the vehicle of gifts or faculties so absolutely enduring that it is no more possible to bestow them a second time than it would be to cut a man's head off, if it were cut off already.

"Such, then, is the implicit importance which Christian psychology assigns to the human body. What is it that it teaches us about the soul? What it teaches, I have set forth already. If the soul—the self—were not an indestructible entity, Christ's work

would be meaningless. It would be equally meaningless if this self were not master of its own actions. Therefore the indestructibility and the responsibility of the self are implicitly the fundamental doctrines of the psychology of the Christian Church ; and if we are asked for the authority which the Church has for teaching them, we need not appeal, though we might do so, to the voice of supernatural revelation. We have two other witnesses, purely human, which corroborate, and indeed anticipate, the voice of God. To one of these I have referred already. I mean the voice of the human intellect, speaking through the world's great thinkers. But the great thinkers are few. There is a greater witness behind them, and this is the corporate voice of the human race at large. What Christ spoke to was a will mysteriously its own master ; but had men not known in themselves that such a will existed, He would have spoken to deaf ears. As it is, the whole heart of the human race responds to Him, and the divine implication of His message is repeated by the Church daily, from all her thousand confessionals, whether at the bedside or elsewhere. What is the universal language in which the penitent Christian confesses? I have sinned—and why have I sinned? Through *my* fault, through *my own* fault, through my own most grievous fault. I was master of myself, but my mastery has been used amiss by me ; and through my own solitary fault, and through nothing outside myself, have I wounded Him that died for me. In every broken, in every contrite heart—in all the unnumbered prayers uttered in sad chambers by men to whom God has given the gift of tears—in all spiritual sorrow—this same implication lives more vitally than in all philosophies.

" Oh eternal spirits to whom I speak, the bodies through which I know your presence, and through which you know mine—they are our instruments in this passing life ; sometimes, alas ! they are our impediments ; sometimes God makes lutes of them, which sound with the very music of the heavens. Study them if you will. Be duly careful of their health. But you will learn no more about the soul from an examination of their nerves and tissues, than you would learn about the quality of a wine by examining the glass that held it. Yes, study the complexities of the corruptible body, if this interests you, but do not forget that, when you confront the destiny which your wills, acting through the corruptible body, shall have prepared for you, the body will have passed away, and your wills and the results of your use of them—these two last things—will be alone and naked before your God. Christ, using our bodies as the mysterious vehicles of His sacraments, will strengthen these wills if we apply to Him ; but even so—let us remember this—our wills remain our own."

The sermon ended abruptly, and was followed by the

announcement of a hymn which was not in the hymnal, but copies of which were now distributed by attendants throughout the church. The result of this unusual proceeding was that, as at the opening of the service, the congregation were mostly silent, and the choir alone was audible. The hymn, which was as follows, bore the title, "Each Soul to its God":—

Lord of light and might,
 Lord, in star and star
 Only three things are
Living in Thy sight.

Thou, the Sun, art one,
 Life of earth and sky.
 One, my God, am I,
Lost, alone, undone.

Like me, of the three
 One, my God, are they—
 Other souls who stray
Lost and alone like me.

Lord, when place and space
 Are not, and the skies
 Hold no worlds, and eyes
Cease to obscure Thy face;

When earth's sun foredone,
 Like an ended thought
 Ends, and all is nought,
May these three be one.

CHAPTER XII

"My dear Nest," exclaimed Mr. Carlton the following night, as Miss Vivian, arrayed for Lord Cotswold's party, entered the drawing-room, where he was sitting alone before dinner, "come here and let me look at you. Let me feel that stuff—all grey clouds and silver. What do you call it? Smoke-colour? And the violets—ah, how sweet! And the shoes—put out the little shoes. And now, the feather fan and the gloves—all of the same shade. You impertinent little wretch—how naughty of you! Do you want to break every one of our poor hearts? But, my dear, turn round to the light. I don't quite approve of those purple streaks under your eyes. Little girls like you must be careful not to overdo themselves. You've the dress of a French coquette, but you've the eyes of a little tired-out saint. But cheer up. You needn't look in the glass. All this merely makes you doubly dangerous."

The party was to begin at ten o'clock. Lady Conway and Sir Rawlin had dined at the Turkish Castle; and dinner, which was somewhat late, was but just drawing to its conclusion when a series of chimes proclaimed that the appointed hour was on them.

Lord Cotswold had explained that he had got together about forty guests—some of them being Indian or Colonial officials and their wives, now domiciled at Southquay, who years ago had been hospitable to him in the course of his many travels, and of whom—of the wives especially—he entertained grateful recollections. Others were local residents who possessed political influence, or who were, like old Mrs. Summerfield, retired veterans of the world. Mr. Barton who, it was hoped, would be the musical hero of the evening, was to be kept in countenance by the performances of a small string band; and an entertainment which might possibly be even more popular than the music—that is to say, an exhibition of moving photographs—was to take place in Dr. Thistlewood's big bare room, Mr. Hugo having been invited to assist, or at all events, to patronize the operator.

"Well," said Lord Cotswold, when the clock's last notes had sounded, "Rawlin, Dr. Gustav, and I must have our cigars later.

The music will be in the room that opens into the conservatory. We can smoke and be warm under a palm tree while our clergyman discourses music."

The arrivals soon began, and the string band in the music-room struck up punctually at the first peal of the door-bell. The company were easy to entertain, as the larger part of them knew each other; and the inspection of a singular house, which had hitherto been a local mystery, was enough to keep them, as they dispersed themselves, amused, talking, and occupied.

In due time came the party from Cliff's End. "My dear," said Lord Cotswold to Miss Vivian, "you are the moon clothed in clouds. I wonder if we can find you an Endymion. We can find you a seat, at all events. Most of my friends have gone on into the music-room."

The music-room was dimly lighted by a number of coloured lanterns, and the general effect was pleasing. Rumours that Mr. Barton was going to play were in circulation, but he had not yet arrived; nor did he do so before Lord Cotswold, in order to make up for his absence, had given an order, entrusted to Mr. Hugo, that the moving photographs should be exhibited as a preliminary diversion. Most of the guests were trooping in to the exhibition when, full of apologies, the defaulter greeted his host; and failing in the dimness of the music-room to detect any presence that appealed to him, he adopted his host's suggestion that he should follow the disappearing sightseers.

When the last of this band had gone, Lord Cotswold heaved a sigh of relief. As he did so he drew out a large cigar-case, and quietly passed through the open window into the conservatory, from the shadowy leafage of which came the murmur of two men's voices. The music-room had, however, been not left quite empty. Miss Vivian, when the exodus began, had remained in a shaded corner; and she now discovered that she was not wholly alone, but that Lady Conway was facing her, who likewise had not stirred.

"Come," said Lady Conway, "come and sit down by me. That's right. Now I can talk to you comfortably. Tell me, who made your dress? When I was your age I never had frocks like that. Oh, my dear, what a bore—here comes the Church in person, as cross as two sticks at seeing you appropriated by the world. It's you the good man wants. You're one of his pet lambs, I suppose. Music or no music, your Mr. Barton has a very bad, nasty temper. But he shan't interrupt us. Mr. Barton—for I'm sure it's you, even in this dim religious light—now that the band's in abeyance, do sit down and play to us. Play something soft—play anything—just for our two selves—anything," she added to Miss Vivian, "which will prevent his trying to talk to us."

Mr. Barton, who, after a vain and anxious search, had only found Miss Vivian to find her absorbed in a companionship which kept him at a hopeless distance, certainly did exhibit an aspect of painful sternness which excused, if it did not justify, Lady Conway's comments on his temper. Still, to play to the girl, if he could not speak to her, would be something; and his mastery of music, which even Lady Conway recognized, would enable him there and then to challenge her insidious influence. With a slight bow and with a sufficiently good grace he accordingly seated himself at the piano, whose low and liquid vibrations, as he took some pleasure in noting, reduced this disdainful woman at once to a listening silence. On Lady Conway, however, this effect did not last long. Presently her ear was penetrated by sounds of another kind, namely, those of a subdued conversation proceeding from a group of men who were seated outside the window on the broad steps of the conservatory. A sudden flash in her eyes showed that she had divined its tenour.

"Mr. Barton," she exclaimed, "don't stop playing, whatever you do. We are only moving in order to hear better. My dear, do you mind coming rather nearer the window? Hush! we'll pull out the curtain. That will shelter you from the draught."

The voices of those outside were now clearly audible. The music filled the room with its soft dissolving cadences; but Lady Conway saw, as she knew she would, that her companion's ears heard nothing of it. "It's just as well," she said to herself, "that she should realize what men are."

"Civilized women of the different civilized races," Dr. Thistlewood was saying in quiet, reflective tones, to which the slightest trace of some un-English accent—it might have been French or American—lent a certain elusive pungency, "differ as much from each other as the languages in which they talk, and as little."

"Rawlin," said Lord Cotswold, "do you remember the Persian rose-garden, and the trickling cistern, and the scents, and the new moon, and our Brahmin—our sage from afar—who preached to us on the 'Great Sentence,' which means that, if we would know ourselves, we must know the divine Infinite, we being all of us nodes or passing miniatures of it? Do you remember that, and how you half shocked, half puzzled him by saying, in illustration of his doctrine, that you, when talking to one attractive woman, often forgot that she was not another, the only change being that she had migrated to a different house?"

"That seems," replied Sir Rawlin, "an unfeeling thing to have said; and yet what it means is, in one sense, the essence of all religion. All the great religions tell us to love man as man. This can only mean that we are to love not men, but manhood, which alone gives a similar value to Harry and Tom and Dick. And if

this is true about men, it is true about women also. What allures us in each individual is not a woman, but womanhood. It is this that we really seek for in Moll, in Meg, or in Marjory."

"I don't know," said Dr. Thistlewood, "whether you are talking orthodox religion; but you are, at all events, talking orthodox science. A man has a passion for roses; but his passion does not lose its object with the death of any single flower. As our host here was saying only the other night, the individual women men love are merely so many cups which dip up for them the same mysterious water; and a similar thing is true of the driest scientific experiment. Every experiment must be made on a particular specimen—whether of a gas, of a mineral, of blood, or of fermenting beer. But we value the specimen for everything rather than for itself. Each is only a different eye-piece through which we peer into the same universe."

"The Buddhists and the Brahmins," said Sir Rawlin, "both preach the same gospel; and here are we, with our white neckties, repeating it. But I doubt if, when it comes to practice, I have quite the courage of my opinions. If the individual woman is nothing more than the cup, still it is the cup alone that enables us to drink the water; and for each of us, only one such cup out of every thousand will hold it. If we find one that will, we should be careful not to break it."

"That," said Lord Cotswold, putting his hand on Sir Rawlin's shoulder, "is what Dr. Gustav does not see. There are some kinds of experiment which he has never himself tried. If he had, he would know how life seems to give the lie to science. But here are our guests coming back again, having exhausted the pleasures of photography. Finish your cigars if you like. I shall have to sacrifice mine."

The three smokers rose. Lord Cotswold and Dr. Thistlewood disappeared at once into the music-room, where Mr. Barton, still the victim of circumstance, became a centre of entreaties from his host and from a ring of others, that he would not leave the instrument, but would give them what they hoped to hear. He looked round the room for Miss Vivian. He could not see her; and perforce he resumed his playing. Sir Rawlin remained behind, standing just outside the window. Not a yard away from him, partially hidden by a curtain, a figure stirred within, diffusing a faint perfume, and presently stood confronting him. Miss Vivian had supposed him to have passed in with his companions, and was herself on the point of seeking a seclusion which she took for solitude. On seeing him she slightly started, and made a movement as though she would turn away.

Sir Rawlin instinctively held out a hand to check her; and there

was something in his eyes and manner which she found herself unable to resist.

"What," he said, speaking hardly above a whisper, "are you going to run away from me? It's days since I've seen you—days since I've said a word to you. We shall be able to talk in here; or, if you'd rather listen to the music, you shall just sit by me and be silent."

She seemed to hesitate for a moment, the colour mounted to her cheeks; then she held out her hand to him, and he led her down the glimmering steps.

"Till I saw you again," he said, "I hardly knew how I'd missed you. Look, here are two chairs. Have the one with the cushions. That's right. Be comfortable. Well, we can talk at last."

"Tell me," she answered, "are you sure that I don't bore you? If that's so, I'll say to you, as I think I must have said to you at the ball, 'Don't talk to me yet.' That's the last thing which I remember saying to you then. Let me listen for a little to the music, and get myself ready for a question I want to ask you."

For a full minute or so they both of them remained silent. Then she turned to him, with her face half hidden by her fan, and said softly but carelessly—

"Mr. Barton plays well, doesn't he?"

"He is," said Sir Rawlin, "a man of many accomplishments. Do you like him?"

Above the feathers of the smoke-coloured fan her eyes showed a faint smile.

"Yes," she answered, "enormously. Taken in conjunction with a piano, Mr. Barton is—I wonder if you'd understand if I tried to explain myself by a simile."

"Try me," he answered. "Let me hear what your simile is."

"In conjunction with what I spoke of," she continued—"I mean a piano or an organ—Mr. Barton is a cup which dips up very beautiful music. I'm not sure now whether I won't keep my question to myself."

"You must," said Sir Rawlin, abruptly, "do so for the moment, at all events. Listen. There are people coming. Suppose we go somewhere else. At the far end of the conservatory is a smoking-room in a round tower. We shan't be interrupted there."

The girl had risen almost as quickly as he had; and they were soon making their way along a lane between banked flowers, whilst on one side through glass, which was partially dimmed by moisture, came the shinings of the moon and sea. Lady Conway, on the evening when she had made her inspection of the premises, had observed correctly that here was a place for lovers.

"You heard, then," said Sir Rawlin presently, "what we were talking about as we sat smoking?"

"Some of it," the girl replied. "My question has to do with that. Wait till I ask it. I'm not going to ask it yet. Stand still and look. Does this remind you of nothing? It's like that place at the ball, where I lost myself in that stupid dream; and Lady Conway —do you remember, for I'm rather vague about it myself—suddenly came in meddling, as if we were two children. She's a kind of woman who wants to have everybody to herself. Good heavens, what a startling eclipse! That didn't happen at the ball. One would think that the moon had been blown out like a candle."

"That's odd," said Sir Rawlin. "The night seemed clear enough. Let us go to the window in the tower. There we shall see better what's actually happening."

The door of the tower was open, and firelight shone within. Facing them was a large window, giving access to a seaward balcony. They stationed themselves by its ample panes, and looked out on a scene which charmed them by its visionary wildness. The sea lay before them a moving floor of waters. The moon was by this time wholly lost to sight; and masses of travelling cloud, the conformations of which were vaguely distinguishable, had already half covered the sky with their slowly-moving, noiseless wings.

"If you and I were outside in the dimness," said the girl at last, "I should hardly see you as clearly as I did when you helped me to steady myself in the mist. But I shouldn't have to trouble you with that kind of steadying now. Everything changes—don't you think it does? There's one question for you, though it is not the one I meant."

"Let me," said Sir Rawlin, "hear the one that you did mean. I'll do my best to answer it. My inclination is to say too much to you, rather than too little."

"Come, then," she said, taking him gently by the coat, whilst she looked at him with a smile which at first made him doubt her seriousness, "tell me just this. Do men really think of women as wine-glasses, which they put to their lips, drink from, and then throw away behind them? Is that what happens? Is that what men mean by kisses? I should very much like to know."

"My dear," said Sir Rawlin, slowly, "you must never let a simile run away with you. Still, if you keep to this one, which was not my own, but Dr. Thistlewood's, you shall have my sincere answer. Should a man know that, if he drank from one of these delicate vessels, it might, owing to his nature or his circumstances, drop from his hand afterwards, he had better remain thirsty, and not drink at all. This is a hard saying. One only learns its truth from experience."

"If I were the glass," said Miss Vivian—and her eyes were now cast

down—"and if I found myself being treated like that, I should feel not that I was being taken care of, but that I was not worth being lifted. But you know better than I do—yes, for you have had experience—by which you mean many experiences—just as you have seen many countries; and I dare say you have broken and thrown away many things. Isn't that so? I think it must be, for look—do you know what you are doing now? If you don't go away, or if I don't, you'll have broken my flowers presently—my poor unfortunate violets. How dark they look! See, by this light they are almost black. No matter. You may break them if you like——"

But her words ended in a gasp. At that moment, and for a flickering moment only, Sir Rawlin's face to her, and her face to him, seemed to have been transfigured into a mask of illuminated alabaster, and a pennon of blinding fire had shaken itself across the night outside. The next thing Sir Rawlin knew was that her face was hidden on his shoulder, and the beating of her heart was as audible to him as if it had been his own. Then, after a breathless silence, came a crackle and a roar of thunder, so long and loud that the window-frames and the floor trembled.

Sir Rawlin, remembering what he had seen before, had been conscious for a moment of nothing but a fear that the girl might faint, and of an urgent anxiety of a common-sense kind as to the consequences. Something, however, told him that this precise result was unlikely. When the thunder began she had clung to him yet more closely, but the manner in which she did so showed him that she was not losing her strength.

"Nest," he said to her, not pausing to chose his words, "Nest, my dearest child, come back to the music-room. You won't see the lightning, and you'll hardly hear the thunder there." But he felt that his suggestion met with curiously small approval. Her laces brushed his hands. The scent of her violets, which were now being bruised indeed, faintly touched his nostrils. Then, as he could not extricate himself, his face bent slowly down towards her, and she was aware that a kiss had formed itself, as his lips just brushed her hair. At that instant came a second flash, which seemed to have licked the window-panes, and the thunder followed after barely a second's interval. "Come," he repeated, "come inside at once. It is madness to wait here longer—madness for many reasons. What, my child, won't you do as I ask you? Nest, do you know this?—I have dreamed of you every night."

At last she looked up at him, her head thrown slightly back. He felt the momentary pressure of her deep-drawn happy sigh, and her eyes, dim and glimmering with a new appeal, were expectant.

"I too have dreamed," she said. "I have dreamed of this—of this. I was dreaming of this when I was trying to paint the sea."

These last words, which were a whisper, seemed to lose themselves in a blue-white blaze, accompanied by a crash quite close to them, like that of an exploding shell. The floor and the walls shook, and a pane of glass was shivered. For a moment they were both bewildered by the sound, the flame, the shock. The room was filled with dust and an odd sulphurous odour. Sir Rawlin, quickly recovering himself, looked first towards the window, then at the girl whose hand was now gripping his. To his astonishment, she was smiling calmly.

"Well," she said, "after all, we are still alive, or I think we are."

"Do you know," said Sir Rawlin, "what has happened? The lightning has struck the balcony. It has twisted the rails, and a bit of the stone has fallen. Now, positively and with no more nonsense, you must go."

He wound his arm round her waist, with the effect very nearly of carrying her, and hurried her back through the narrow passage of the conservatory. They neither of them lost their wits, however, for by the time they had reached the steps which would bring them back to the music-room, their bearing was beyond reproach—not only his, but hers. She had skilfully patted her violets into something like their pristine order, and contrived, with possibly more success than he, to enter as though nothing unusual had happened except the storm.

Her companion was lost in wonder at her singular self-possession; but he noticed as she sat down, which she did at his suggestion, on the first chair that presented itself, that her limbs had begun to tremble.

"I must," he said, "tell Lord Cotswold about the accident that has befallen his outworks."

"Do," she said smiling. "Find him. I am perfectly happy here."

Their entrance had been unnoticed, as had probably been their absence also; for the storm, which had interrupted Mr. Barton in his triumphant rendering of a Mass, had constituted a more moving performance than the finest piano-playing in the world.

Lord Cotswold, catching sight of Sir Rawlin, came towards him with an odd glitter in his eyes.

"This is nearly as fine," he said, "as what you and I witnessed once amongst the mounds of Babylon, with nothing but a tent to protect us. We had, my dear fellow, no lightning-conductors there. We had to take our chance, and we enjoyed it."

"I don't want to frighten your company," said Sir Rawlin, lowering his voice, "but you must, I think, have taken your conductors on trust. A bit of the balcony of your smoking-room window is gone. I was close by when it happened."

"Then my landlord," said Lord Cotswold, placidly, "must bear

the loss of his balcony better than I, my dear Rawlin, should have borne the loss of you."

A plaintive voice interrupted them. It was Lady Susannah Lipscombe's.

"Sir Rawlin," she said, "can you tell me what's become of Nest? I can't see her anywhere. You know what makes me anxious."

"You needn't be anxious," he answered. "I had taken her to see the conservatory just when the storm broke. There she is, and you'll find her as calm as you are."

Lady Susannah hastened to the girl's side. Lord Cotswold's eyes followed her.

"If the shepherdess is frightened, as the aunt seems to suppose, she's the first shepherdess I've seen who could make fright ornamental. Another flash—did you see it? And now wait for the thunder. Hark! it was a long time coming. The storm's drifting away from us. Listen again. That's rain. Well, since our friends are no longer in danger, they will be brave enough to enjoy hearing how close danger has been."

The news of the catastrophe proved to be highly popular, and one or two adventurous spirits, headed by Mr. Hugo, who felt from his intimate knowledge of it that the lightning of it was a sort of cousin of his own, set out to inspect the havoc with a pleasant sense of intrepidity. Mr. Barton, meanwhile, who had again been searching for Miss Vivian, having now seen her, and having seen too that she had no other company than her aunt's, made his way towards her with an eagerness which he could ill restrain. By the time he had reached her she had risen, and with no signs of discomposure other than a slight impatience, was affecting to pull up her long gloves over her elbows, which, as a matter of fact, they showed no inclination to leave.

"My dear," her aunt was saying to her, "you're sure that you feel quite well?"

"Perfectly," the girl answered. "I'm only a little restless. I feel as if I must walk about."

"Will you," said Mr. Barton, "take a turn about the room with me?"

"There's nothing in the world," she answered, "that I should like less. I beg your pardon. I hardly knew what I was saying. Come, Mr. Barton—yes, stroll with me round the room, as you said. Unfortunately we can't go fast, and I would sooner walk than talk."

Mr. Barton was overjoyed to secure her, let the terms be what they might. The scantiness of the furniture rendered walking easy; and the company, though some had by this time gone in to supper, was still sufficiently numerous to render it not conspicuous. Their

wandering *tête-à-tête* had not, however, lasted long when it met with an interruption which jarred on Mr. Barton's nerves as one of the most affronting and unpardonable kind conceivable. Dr. Thistlewood, who had been for some time missing, entered the room in haste, and without any apology for his intrusiveness instantly came up to them.

"Mr. Barton," he began, "I have something special to say to you."

Mr. Barton bowed stiffly.

Dr. Thistlewood, however, taking no note of his manner, had turned to Miss Vivian with a glance that searched her face.

"What is this?" he said. "Has the thunder upset your nerves a little? It often does that to some people. You stay here, young lady, and I'll speak to you in another moment."

Mr. Barton's face had grown more and more severe. "Well, sir," he said, "what is it?"

"I want to tell you," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that in one of the cottages over the hill there's a woman in the act of dying. I've been with her for the last half-hour. The parish doctor was engaged. My remedies and advice have already done all they can. She is anxious to receive yours, which I trust may be more effectual. The case is not infectious, and you needn't be afraid of the rain. It was stopping as I re-entered the house. If it weren't that this young lady would be the better for a little attention, I would have walked there with you myself. As it is, I will join you shortly. Redmond the woman's name is. My servant, who will show you the way, is at the door with a little case for you. It contains everything that is necessary for the administration of your last sacraments."

Mr. Barton was completely taken aback. His lip quivered. He went through some obvious struggle. Then his expression changed, and offering Dr. Thistlewood his hand, "I thank you," he said, "for being a messenger and also an example of duty to me." And turning on his heel he went.

"And now," said Dr. Thistlewood to Miss Vivian, "do you mind my having a little talk with *you?*"

"Not in the least," she answered with a slight involuntary shiver. "I don't know why I did that. I'm sure I haven't caught a chill. Yes, Dr. Thistlewood, talk. I think it would be a rest to hear you. Where shall we go? I'll go anywhere you like to tell me."

"I knew," he said, "that day when you sang at tea to us, and when for a moment you felt that you were going to sleep—I knew that your influenza had left some trace behind it. Nerves, nerves—we are all of us made up of nerves. I've a little den of my own

here, which leads out of that passage. Shall we go in there for a minute or two? It will do you good to rest."

She accompanied him with the docility of a child, and they entered a small sitting-room furnished with comfortable chairs.

"There," said Dr. Thistlewood, soothingly, "sit down by the fire. We won't talk about health. Your own doctor must do that. Let us talk about imagination. I should think you were very imaginative."

"Am I?" she said indifferently. "Why do you tell me that?"

"I mean," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that, if an idea is suggested to you, it is often sufficiently vivid to affect you in some practical way. For instance, when I spoke to you about not going to sleep, you woke up at once, and the little passing weakness cured itself. But we're not going to be medical. When I speak about your imagination now, what I mean is that, if one mentions or describes an object to you, your mind or imagination conjures up for you an almost visible image of it. Here now is a book—a Bradshaw, with a red leather cover, on which are three blots of ink. My impression is that, if I told you to think of this afterwards, you would, much more clearly than nine people out of ten, see a mental image of this blotted book before you. You don't think there's much in that. No—but highly suggestible imaginations can sometimes do more that those who possess them are aware of. Suppose we try; and, if you fancy I am playing you a trick—well, you must catch me out. Here's the book, then. Look at it. Now close both your eyes, and when you open them you will find that the book has disappeared."

With a faint smile of resignation she closed her eyes, as directed, murmuring as she did so—

"This is like some game of a schoolboy's. Don't do anything disagreeable. Don't put something nasty in my mouth."

"Now," said Dr. Thistlewood, the book being still held out to her, "open your eyes. Where is the Bradshaw now?"

"I don't know," she replied. "You have hidden it away somewhere. Anybody could have done that."

"What do you think," he said, "that I am doing with my right hand?"

"It looks to me," said the girl, "as if you were pretending to hold something with it. Oh, I understand you now. You want to see if I can imagine that the book's there."

Dr. Thistlewood laughed. "Well," he said, "put out your hand and feel. Is my hand only pretending? Do your fingers feel nothing solid?"

Miss Vivian started. "Yes," she said, "they seem to be touching a book, but I see only empty air. Perhaps if I'd not my gloves on——"

But Dr. Thistlewood interrupted her. "Never mind about the gloves," he said. "Just stay quiet and watch me. The book is in my right hand still. I am going to transfer it to my left. As soon as my left hand has hold of it, you will see it again as large as life."

"Yes," said Miss Vivian; "that's perfectly true. I see it. But this is all a trick, and I can't guess tricks to-night. I should like to sleep for five minutes. I wish I was in my own bed."

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, kindly, "I won't trouble you any more. Yes, go to sleep for a minute or two. It's the best thing you can do. I'll speak to Lady Susannah, and when the carriage is ready I'll come back for you."

When he found himself again in the music-room the company was fast dispersing, and Lady Susannah and Mr. Carlton, both of them in some agitation, were inquiring of Sir Rawlin if he knew where Miss Vivian was."

"I'm afraid," said Dr. Thistlewood, coming up to her, "that, in a natural and a quite unalarming way, Miss Vivian is beginning to feel what she didn't seem to feel at first. I mean the shock caused by the lightning when it happened to hit the house. Don't be anxious. I congratulate you on your young lady's courage. Only self-restraint is an effort, and the effort has had the happy effect of tiring her. At the present moment she is sound asleep in my study. The best thing will be, if we can manage it, to get her quietly home without waking her and have her put straight to bed. I suppose you have two carriages. I will order one of them, if you'll let me, to come round to the private door and we'll get her into it without any fuss or trouble. If you wouldn't mind going home with her yourself now, the rest of your party can come on when it suits them. I see a young man of yours there, who is sitting down to a game of cards."

Dr. Thistlewood exhibited such masterly promptitude that, before five minutes were over, his arrangements were all complete. The side-door was not far from his sitting-room, and he himself, carrying the girl as though she were no more than a feather, had placed her in the carriage, her sleep being quite unbroken.

"She's very light," he said to Lady Susannah. "Your own servants—I noticed that you have a stalwart footman—will have no difficulty in getting her to her own room. The longer she can sleep the better. I will call or send to-morrow to hear of her complete recovery."

"Tell me," said Lord Cotswold, when Dr. Thistlewood appeared again, "what's all this? I hope there's nothing really the matter with her."

Dr. Thistlewood explained what had happened, and assured him that there was nothing to be alarmed about.

"If I," said Lady Conway, looking up from the card-table, at which she had begun to give Oswald his first lesson in Piquet—"if I had been at that window I should have been frightened out of my life. I envy young people whom a thunderbolt merely puts to sleep at bedtime. Oswald, my dear boy, you're incorrigible. Fancy playing a card like that. It strikes me forcibly that, unless this narcotic tempest is going to make all of us sleep on Lord Cotswold's chairs and sofas, we had better be following Miss Vivian's example, and taking ourselves back to our own lawful pillows. My dear Dr. Gustav," she continued, "why that hat in your hand, and that grey coat over your arm? Has your own lawful pillow suddenly ceased to be enough for you?"

Dr. Thistlewood, who was actually carrying with him both these articles of attire, looked at Lady Conway with a sort of contemptuous friendliness.

"Your penetration," he said, "does you credit. I am going, as you guess, to a pillow that is not my own—the pillow of a woman who is dying, if she is not already dead. Next to the manner in which human beings live, the most interesting thing to me is the manner in which they die. I hope to be in time to witness the application of the priest's anæsthetics, which in some cases, though not in all, give more relief than ours."

CHAPTER XIII

HAD the lightning struck Sir Rawlin, and reduced him to a scorched cripple, his consciousness of having suffered some staggering and incalculable disaster could hardly have been greater than it was the following morning. He was loaded with a sense that in one unguarded moment—a moment in which his own conduct had been wrenched out of his hands by circumstances—he had taken a step which even yet he could hardly grasp as real. Lady Conway, so he told himself, had been absolutely right from the first. In spite of her warnings, in spite of his own caution, he had put himself in a position from which, alike in his own eyes and those of all reasonable people, he could only emerge as an object either of ridicule or the crudest condemnation. To marry this girl who was less than half his age, and to whom, though the thought of her even now made a deep appeal to him, he could never be a true companion except as a lifelong *tour de force*—to marry her would be an experiment foredoomed to grotesque disaster. And yet, having held her in his arms, in what way could he meet her again, unless he were prepared, as Lady Conway had put it, to satisfy the expectations he had so madly permitted himself to raise?

There was, however, one duty which he certainly could not neglect—a duty which was simple and immediate. Miss Vivian's indisposition, though nobody had made too much of it, had at least been sufficient to demand that, in the course of the morning, he should send to Cliff's End, or else call there, to inquire if she were quite recovered. Resolving to grasp his nettle, he chose the latter alternative. He went as early as possible, in the hope that he would thus see nobody but a servant, and would yet at the same time be exhibiting a due solicitude. Comparing his present with his previous journeys to the house, he now felt like a criminal who was going to his own execution.

Fate, however, had some relief in store for him. Whilst the butler, in answer to his inquiries, was giving him the comfortable information that slight over-fatigue was Miss Vivian's only malady—such was Dr. Thistlewood's verdict—and that she still was sound asleep, Dr. Thistlewood himself appeared, accompanied by Lady

Susannah, who, smiling with quiet satisfaction, was thanking him for his help and counsel.

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, when, after a little conversation on the doorstep, he and Sir Rawlin went down the drive together, "I don't think we need trouble ourselves much about our charming young lady this time. The probability is that, by when she wakes up—and it will be a capital thing for her if she sleeps the whole day through—she'll quite have forgotten the storm and everything else connected with it. Retrograde amnesia—that's what some doctors call it—is, in constitutions like hers, a very common occurrence. She'll merely remember that she went to Lord Cotswold's party—that she talked to you at the beginning of it, that she listened to Mr. Barton's playing, and that somehow she went to sleep in a corner and was taken home to her bed; and the matter will end there."

Had the skies at midnight opened and poured down a flood of sunlight, the aspect of the world for Sir Rawlin could not have been more changed. He felt like a man who has been roused from a portentous nightmare. So great was his relief that he dared not trust himself to speak. But his caution was unnecessary. Dr. Thistlewood's thoughts already had taken a new direction.

"By the way, last night," he said, "I got back just in time to see our friend, Mr. Barton, engaged in his proper work. Any one is impressive who really believes what he preaches; and the old woman, who I shrewdly suspect was a Catholic, could not have made a better ending had he been one of her own priests. I had thought of going this morning to have a look at those cottages by daylight."

"The ground," said Sir Rawlin, "on which they stand is mine. They are leaseholds, and I've no authority; but I'll go with you myself, and we'll consider what ought to be done. The only two acts we are certain not to regret are to avoid giving pain, and to alleviate it."

"Alleviate it when you can," said Dr. Thistlewood; "when you can't, don't be disturbed by it. In those two commandments lie all the law and the prophets. I shouldn't wonder if we found our priest at the cottages. I'm sure he's a good man, for he was able, when we parted, to shake hands with me, though he grudged me my acquaintance with his sacraments, which is quite as great as his own."

With regard to Mr. Barton, this conjecture proved correct. Sir Rawlin and Dr. Thistlewood found him there, when they reached the spot, just emerging from the cottage of the woman who had died last night. His priestly manner was for the time in abeyance. He was the cool, practical man, with some knowledge of domestic engineering, and he informed the new-comers that already a sanitary inspector had been summoned by him and was making, at that moment, a house-to-house visitation.

It appeared from what he proceeded to say, that matters were not so bad as they might have been, though the condition of the drains was in many respects a standing danger. Then the conversation was effectually changed in tone by Dr. Thistlewood's observing to him, as a thing which he might be glad to hear, that Miss Vivian's breakdown last night was merely a passing trifle, and that to-morrow, or at least in a day or two, she would be just as well as she ever was.

Mr. Barton had forgotten the words—indeed, at the time they were spoken he had noted them only as an interruption—which Dr. Thistlewood last night had addressed to Miss Vivian in his hearing; and he learned now for the first time that she had ended the evening otherwise than in her normal health. The slight sense of resentment, and the keen sense of anxiety, which the behaviour of the girl at the party had not failed to produce in him, at once gave way to a solicitous and protecting pity; and having learned that this fragile life was now sleeping peacefully, he departed conscious of emotions which failed to be peaceful likewise only because they had in them the trouble of vague promises, which were too sacred and tender to be submitted to hasty scrutiny. Sir Rawlin was still fretted by the thought of his own late conduct, and was not even yet easy with regard to its possible consequences. Mr. Barton's lot was much happier than his, and before the next day was over it was destined to be happier still.

That same afternoon he made his inquiries at Cliff's End, indulging in some faint hope that he might see the invalid in person. This hope was unrealized, but he did see Lady Susannah; and what Lady Susannah told him thrilled him far more profoundly than anything he could have dreamed of hearing from the lips of the invalid herself. Miss Vivian, he learnt, had slept till an hour ago. She had awoke refreshed and placid, and suffering from nothing but some sense of exhaustion. Her only recollections of the party seemed to be that Mr. Barton had played at it, that while talking to him afterwards she had suddenly felt faint, and that then, somehow or other, she had gone to sleep in a chair. She was apparently much relieved to find that she had caused no disturbance, and especially that in Mr. Barton's presence she had done or said nothing unusual.

"'When is he coming again to talk to me about Confirmation?' That," said Lady Susannah, "is a question which she has just asked twice. You and the question of Confirmation seemed to be uppermost in her mind; and if she's well enough to-morrow afternoon, and you happened to be not otherwise engaged, I really think that to see you would be the best thing for her that could happen."

Here was news which transcended Mr. Barton's wildest hopes,

and which gave them for the first time the outlines of some defined form. The perplexing vacillations which he had come to suspect in her nature between the interests represented by himself, and others connected with some alien mystery of existence, was ending at last in a victory for the soul and God. Though her feet might at times fail her, though her gaze might be at times diverted, her inmost wish and will were to seek that narrow path up which, with the aid of God, his own hands might guide her. "Theophilus," his Lord seemed to say to him, "lovest thou Me more than these?" And before he had time to answer, the Divine voice continued, "If thou lovest Me, feed My lambs."

He was still full of thoughts like these when the hour appointed came, which was to confirm him in his confidence that he alone had read her truly, and make his own nature blossom into a wonder which he hardly recognized as himself. Shortly before five on the following afternoon he almost ran down the road from his own house to Cliff's End, prepared for what was awaiting him, though not even then prescient of it.

He was shown into the drawing-room, where Lady Susannah, who was at tea, offered him a cup which he accepted, but could not force himself to swallow. Freed, as she was, from apprehension as to Miss Vivian's physical health, she exhibited to Mr. Barton a mood of mild complacency which gave a keener tooth to the gnawings of his own impatience.

"My niece," she said, "will be very much pleased to see you; but be careful not to excite her, for she's rather pulled down still. I have had to-day two telegrams—one from her parents, and one from her old physician, Dr. Gonteau, and they both beg that, if possible, she may be placed under the advice of Dr. Thistlewood; and Dr. Thistlewood, who was with her not long before you came, says that no visitor—not even an old friend like you—ought to stay with her this afternoon for more than twenty minutes. Perhaps you won't mind coming into my boudoir. Nest is in there. I'll take you to her now if you are ready."

Mr. Barton rose at once, and followed her with a beating heart. "Ah," said Lady Susannah, as she opened the boudoir door, "she must have gone up to her room. Wait, and I'll send her down to you."

Mr. Barton, who accordingly found himself left alone with Lady Susannah's dim small-patterned chintzes, her china on rosewood what-nots, and a copy of his own parochial magazine on the green velvet cloth of an otherwise bare table, began to be conscious of a hollowness underneath his waistcoat, and a sense that he hardly knew what was about to happen, or what he wished to happen. For a moment he thought it would simplify things if they were only to

talk about the weather, or if he were to make his escape on the pretence that he could wait no longer.

At last Miss Vivian entered. She was dressed in a rose-coloured tea-gown, softened by mysterious laces, which emphasized by a subtle contrast the ivory whiteness of her arms. Pale though she was, and exhibiting signs of lassitude, Mr. Barton felt himself almost aghast at her beauty, and the careless erectness of her carriage. The sight of him seemed to please her, and she offered him a friendly, though a somewhat languid hand.

"It's so nice of you," she said, "to take pity like this on my solitude. I'm afraid you'll find me rather a washed-out rag. Will it fidget you if I walk about a little? I suppose that, having had more than my due share of rest, I am paying for it now by an undue share of restlessness."

Mr. Barton besought her to walk about as she pleased. "I know myself," he said, "what it is to be restless, but I do trust that you are not suffering otherwise." He thought of the occasions on which he had called her "my dear child." He now felt that the smallest intimacy in addressing her was no less impossible than it would have been had this girl been a reigning sovereign.

"Oh no," she answered. "Otherwise I'm right enough. Thank you very much for asking."

With awkward and half-hearted attempts to disguise an increasing shyness, he put to her some farther questions relating to the merest trifles, for he divined that an abrupt approach to any serious topic was impracticable; but her answers, though there was nothing unfriendly in them, amounted to little more than one or two listless words. He began to fear at last that any conversation in her present state might be too much for her, and he was beginning to regard her with a pang of disappointed sympathy, when he found that his timid observations met with no response at all. He looked at her with a sharpened attention. By this time she had ceased to walk. She was leaning against a cabinet opposite to him, and was idly taking up and examining some china cups that stood on it. Then, her head slightly bent and her hand shading her eyes, she remained as though absorbed in thought, and hardly conscious of his presence. A growing fear overtook him that she was possibly about to faint; but suddenly, to his surprise and pleasure, came a marked and reassuring change. With some effort of will it seemed that she had pulled herself together, and once again she began to return his look. But the change, Mr. Barton became aware, had not ended here. Apathy—he could not be deceiving himself—had given place in her to personal interest, and a light had come into her eyes, or the suggestion of a light, which he knew that he must long have dreamed of, but which never till this moment had he seen in them when they met his own.

Mr. Barton felt as if the room were beginning to turn round. This light, this ineffable light, grew more and more unmistakable—appealing, tender, and yet with a vague reproach in it. She moved towards the fire, and sank quietly into a chair, motioning to him to be seated also.

"I suppose," she said, speaking in a low, soft tone, "that women hardly know what feelings are really deepest in them—for sometimes one feels one thing, sometimes another. Do you know, I have so often doubted. I have been swayed this way and that. But events take us at unawares, and then it all comes out. I was sure that you would come back to me. After all you have said to me here—you know what I mean—I was sure that you, from the very first time you saw me, did take a real personal interest in me—yes, and I in you."

"I take more interest in you," said Mr. Barton, in words that came out slowly, each word trembling like a leaf, "in you, in your own self, in your own sacred soul—oh, my beloved one—than I have ever—no, I can't express it. Look at me. Look at me. Look at me. You have taken me into a new world. By-and-by you must teach me a new language."

"I trust you," she replied, with a grave smile. "Yes, I trust you—even if I am only a cup, as Dr. Thistlewood says, to be drunk from and cast aside."

"Did he say that of you?" the unaccustomed lover exclaimed. "The brute beast! My first impression of that man was, after all, right."

"Never mind," she said soothingly. "Don't let us talk of that. For the present—for to-night—it's enough for me to have you here, though you won't be able to stop long. Tell me—how did you manage to come back? As they all must have seen you go, you shouldn't have come back like this."

Mr. Barton, so far as the tumult of his deeper feelings permitted him, was conscious of some faint surprise at this last observation; but he quickly remembered the fact of her protracted sleep, which would naturally have confused and foreshortened her ideas of time, and have probably made her suppose that his last visit to her in that room was yesterday, and that the intimate solemnity of their interview was still uppermost in her mind.

"Tell me," she went on, "which way did you come back just now? Did you come in through the conservatory?"

Why it should be supposed that he had chosen this mode of ingress was beyond Mr. Barton's immediate powers of guessing. A conservatory indeed existed at Cliff's End, to which a door from the porch gave access, and it might for all he knew be possible to enter the house through it; but this was not a route he would ever have thought of choosing.

"No," he replied with a smile, and a certain accession of confidence born of the thought that he was humouring an invalid's fancy, "I came into the hall quite properly first, and I wiped my feet on your aunt's new mat, and then I went into the drawing-room, and then I found my way here."

"What then?" she persisted. "Did any of the servants see you? Didn't they think it odd?"

"The butler," replied Mr. Barton—"yes, he saw me certainly. So did your aunt also."

"She didn't!" exclaimed the girl. "Well, I don't care, after all, whether it was odd or not. You are here. That's all that matters."

"But your aunt," said Mr. Barton, still finding a relief in dwelling on the unessential, "you must know that she saw me. She told you that I was here, and she sent for you."

"Well," said Miss Vivian, laughing faintly, "have it your own way. I'm too tired to be teased. Why are you so far off? Sometimes I can hardly hear you. Come—for one moment—I couldn't stand it for longer—but just for one moment come over and talk to me."

Mr. Barton rose. There happened to be no chair near hers. Before he knew what he had done he found himself at her side, kneeling. She leaned towards him and laid her hand on his hair.

"My aunt," she said, "didn't send for me. How silly you are. I was waiting for you."

"You are more to me," whispered Mr. Barton, thrilling beneath this undreamed-of touch, "than anything in the whole wide world, except Him in whom you and I and all the world exist."

"I was wondering," said Miss Vivian, slowly, "whether you felt things in that way. It's the way I feel myself, and I have wondered whether it was yours too when I burnt the incense that Mr. Barton gave me, and when I read Mr. Barton's book, which points to the star beyond the star. And so that book really speaks your own feelings? For you—for you yourself—the hunger of the lamb is a witness to the growing of the green pastures? Come, I am waiting. Just touch my lips with yours—a touch only, for I could bear no more."

Mr. Barton had never, even in thought, kissed a woman's lips before. This was his first hour of paradise.

"Now," she said, "you must go. That's all I am equal to. My aunt will be coming to look after me. I had rather that you went first."

"I was warned," said Mr. Barton, "that I wasn't to stay long. Much more must be said as soon as my beloved, my beloved, my beloved can bear it—to herself, and to others also."

In the act of rising he so far disobeyed her that he stooped and kissed her on the forehead, as reverently as if he were kissing the dead. She was conscious that he shook all over.

How he got out of that room Mr. Barton never knew. He was like a man who had died and come to life again in a new world. Cliff's End, with its hall, its front door, and its winding laurelled drive, and the public road along which he hurried homewards, were shadows to him. Gradually through this haze of beatitude certain thoughts took shape, which at first brought him to earth with their practical and austere solemnity, and then lifted him up once again on wings. He was one of an Anglican Order whose members, so long as they remained in it, were vowed in secret to celibacy. Of priestly celibacy he had hitherto been an earnest, though not a bigoted advocate. From his brethren and his former opinions he would now have to sever himself.

CHAPTER XIV

Mr. Barton was long in realizing the fulness of what had just happened to him, but he knew that his whole nature had suffered some profound change. His spiritual aspirations were true to their old orientation, but mounting towards the object of them through a new air charged with wonders, the wings of his spirit were lifting him with a bolder sweep, and colours from heaven were shimmering on them which he had never even seen in dreams. He had, in fact, since his last interview with Miss Vivian, passed by a sudden and a curiously belated process from the immaturity of youth to the maturity of a normal, but untainted man.

That night in the small and cell-like room, where he generally wrote his sermons and so often meditated on his knees, he gave himself to the composition of a letter addressed to the Superior of his Order, and announcing the changed prospects which would separate him from the band of brethren. "Dear Father in Christ," it was thus that his letter ended, "pray for me that I may find in this most holy sacrament of marriage such means of grace as will enable me with increased fidelity to work for the ends which are equally sacred to both of us."

This duty having been accomplished, a weight was lifted from his mind. He went out into the suave night air to consign his missive to a pillar-box; and then, having said his prayers, which were not so much prayers as thanksgivings, he betook himself to his narrow bed, so tired with happiness that he felt he could no longer cope with it. But happiness is a foe to sleep, just as pain and sorrow are. Mr. Barton dozed at intervals; but hour after hour was heard by him, as it sounded from the church clock, and the new-born activities of his soul would not let his body rest. At last he struck a match, rose, and hurriedly dressed himself, and throwing round him the folds of a black cloak, took a key from his dressing-table, and again stole out into the dark. "My hair is heavy with dew," he murmured, "and my locks with the drops of the night." The key was one belonging to a side door of the church. He entered, and, unperplexed by the obscurity, made his way to the

chancel, and cast himself on his knees before the altar. There, in the profound silence, he opened his heart to Him who seemed to him at this moment to be a close physical presence no less truly than He was when the Divine body told its advent to man by the touch of the flake-like wafer. "Domine, non sum dignus. Domine, non sum dignus. Oh, Eternal Love, that hast died for me, Thou hast given me love for a teacher, so that, losing myself in love for what is Thine, I may love Thee thyself more worthily." Hours ceased to exist for him, as he appeased his restless spirit by unspoken words like these; and his vigil did not end until in the high windows the robes of the saints and martyrs took a first faint colouring from the dawn. Outside, the pure pale air came to his cheeks with a touch of caressing moisture, and all the purities of the world rose blushing beyond the eastern seas. Before re-entering his house, he lingered in his little plot of garden. Crocus and daffodil were dreaming there of the love that is at the heart of all things; a robin began to twitter amongst the pink blossoms of an apple tree. One of these blossoms touched the happy lover as he passed. He closed his eyes, and for a moment pressed it to his lips.

A dreamless sleep followed; and immediately after breakfast he wrote the following letter, the composition of which was rendered easy to him by the austere simplicity of his mind, and sent it off by messenger to Lady Susannah Lipscombe:—

"Dear Lady Susannah,

"In accordance with what you told me, I remained yesterday with your niece for a very short time only; but, short as the interview was, there is something which I must tell you with regard to it. I must begin at the beginning, and describe to you just what happened. For the first five minutes or so she seemed nervous and restless. Thinking, indeed, that she was perhaps hardly equal to the effort of conversation, I was at last on the point of getting up and going, when her nervousness and restlessness seemed all at once to leave her. There she was, her natural sober self. It had been my intention to say to her, had I found her in a mood to listen, something about those sacred matters to which—I am specially anxious to impress the following fact on your notice—every conversation of mine with her has, on such occasions, been confined. Events, however, yesterday afternoon brought a certain topic forward to which neither of us had ever alluded on any former occasion, and I wish as to this point to speak to you without delay. I wonder, Lady Susannah, if I shall surprise you.

"The character of your niece is so pure, so simple, so full of the spirit of religion, that it made, from the beginning of my acquaintance with her, a very deep impression on me. Will you, then, be

very much surprised if I tell you that I have come to love her? I have never been in love with any one—girl or woman—before, and so, I suppose I did not know what was happening to me. If I had I would have spoken to you earlier, for I would never have entered your house knowingly under false pretences.

"Well, yesterday, by the merest accident, with no premeditation on her part, and with no expectation of such an event on mine, she made me aware that she entertained for me some feeling not unlike that which had grown up in me for her. Then I for the first time—yes, Lady Susannah, then for the very first time—understood myself. It was all done in a moment. I did not stay long. I think I left her happy. But if she should regret anything—if she should be in any doubt—let it all be as though it never had been. As to myself, I have fair private means, and as to my family connections, I believe that you would consider them respectable. I am, in all honesty and candour, yours,

"THEOPHILUS BARTON."

Having despatched this letter, with instructions to the messenger not to wait for an answer, Mr. Barton tried to devote himself to the examination of some parish accounts; but his efforts were unavailing, and he was losing himself in a lover's dream, when his maid-servant burst into the room, and said, presenting him with a card—

"The gentleman, sir, he wishes to see you most particular."

The card was the card of Dr. Thistlewood—of the unclean and blatant cynic for whom the purest of women was "a cup to be drunk from and thrown away." Mr. Barton's eyebrows met together in a menacing frown, and he was about to say, "Tell him that I can see nobody," when it suddenly struck him that this visit, at an hour so unusual, might possibly be connected with the occurrence of some fresh case of illness. He accordingly composed his countenance, and replied—

"Show the gentleman in."

"I trust," he began at once in a tone of cold anxiety, as though he were addressing his visitor across some impassable gulf—"I trust that there has been no fresh outbreak?"

Dr. Thistlewood greeted him with an easy but grave courtesy which, against Mr. Barton's will, did something to disarm his anger.

"No," said Dr. Thistlewood. "If you mean our poor friends in the cottages, I have no bad news whatever; but if you could kindly spare me a few moments, I do want to consult you about the health of one of your parishioners, on whose present condition you might, I think, throw some light."

"I'm a busy man," said Mr. Barton, still frigid, "but if there's

any information which I can suitably give you, I will do so. Pray sit down, and permit me to take your hat."

"I have," said Dr. Thistlewood, speaking with a leisurely seriousness, "come here on behalf of a friend of yours—Lady Susannah Lipscombe. The matter has its own importance. I have only this moment left her."

Mr. Barton felt, as he heard this unexpected announcement, that ice-cold drops of perspiration were creeping out on his forehead. Could Lady Susannah, before his letter had reached her, have learned and been indignant at what had occurred yesterday? And had this godless doctor been sent to take him to task for it? Or was she—his beloved one—worse? Could it be that she was dead or dying? Had happiness been too much for her?

"I trust," he stammered, "that there is nothing wrong—wrong at Cliff's End—with any one?"

"If by anything being wrong," said Dr. Thistlewood, "you mean anybody's life being in danger, I can set your mind at rest. Nobody at Cliff's End is in any danger whatever. You know, however, that Miss Vivian—a highly nervous subject—was upset the other night by the thunderstorm. Certain after-effects of that slight jar still continue, and if we desire to get rid of them quickly, we ought, in a case like this, to acquaint ourselves with even her slightest symptoms. And now, Mr. Barton, before I go farther, let me explain to you that Miss Vivian's parents, by the advice of my old friend Dr. Gonteau—Miss Vivian's former physician—have telegraphed from Nice to request that she may be placed under my own care. Their request, supplemented by Lady Susannah's, must form my apology for intruding on you. And so let us get to business. You were yourself, as Lady Susannah tells me, the last, and indeed the only visitor whom Miss Vivian has seen since this little indisposition of hers; and I have accordingly come, with Lady Susannah's sanction, to ask in what way she struck you. Did you notice that there was in her conversation anything odd or unusual?"

Having been cold a moment ago, Mr. Barton now grew hot. "You place me, sir," he said stiffly, "in a position of some embarrassment. You may perhaps be aware that my intimacy with the young lady in question originated in my having been called upon to instruct her with regard to religious matters. Most of my conversation with her has been systematically confined to these; and conversation of that kind I am bound to regard as private."

"Of course, of course," said Dr. Thistlewood. "I have, as a doctor, been associated with as many priests as laymen. I understand your position, and I respect it. But the questions I want to put to you have no reference whatever to anything which Miss Vivian may have said to you of a sacred or even a confidential

character. What I want to ask you about is only such ordinary and casual observations as are bound to occur here and there in the course of the most serious interviews. Here's an example. I once learnt something extremely useful about a patient from being told that, in the middle of a conversation—I don't know what about, and I never asked with whom—she had complained of the coldness of the room when the temperature was really eighty. In the present case what I am anxious to know is whether, when the young lady was referring to ordinary matters, you happened to notice in her any straying of attention, or any tendency, after her long sleep, to confuse the order in which recent events had happened."

"Oh," said Mr. Barton in a tone of great relief, "is that the sort of thing you mean? I beg your pardon if at first I answered you rather cavalierly. Yes, do you know, now you mention it, I did notice something of the very kind you refer to. She seemed to think that my last private visit to her for the purpose of talking about Confirmation, which was really some days before, had occurred—I couldn't quite tell when, but very lately, very lately indeed."

"May I ask," said Dr. Thistlewood, "how she conveyed this impression to you?"

"Well," replied Mr. Barton, "instead of speaking about my having called again, she spoke about my having come back, which is the sort of thing she might have done had I only just left the house."

Dr. Thistlewood nodded. "Quite so," he said, "quite so. Was there anything else you noticed at all of the same kind?"

"No," said Mr. Barton, reflecting. "I don't think there was much else. She said, by the way, that when I was there last everybody had seen me go. Now that wasn't true. Perhaps she was thinking of the day when you and I met at tea there." Mr. Barton, realizing that the catechism was quite innocuous, was beginning to find an excuse for talking about Miss Vivian pleasant. He set himself to reflect further. "Well," he said, actually allowing himself to smile, "that's a puzzler. And—oh yes—now I think of it, there were one or two little odd things more. She asked me if I had come back through the conservatory."

"Ah!" Dr. Thistlewood exclaimed, looking up rather sharply. "Is there a conservatory at Cliff's End through which visitors often enter?"

"No," said Mr. Barton, as though proud of Miss Vivian's fancy, "that's just where the oddness comes in. Then, too, there was another thing, though I don't know if it comes to much. She happened to quote something from a little book by myself; and she used a phrase which might—yes, which certainly might, show that her mind had a momentary tendency to stray. She quoted

my book, saying to me, 'That's what Mr. Barton tells us.' This might of course have been merely a sort of friendly playfulness; but it may on the other hand have meant that, her mind for the moment being absorbed by the substance of the book, she failed for just the passing moment to realize that she was talking to the author."

"Well, Mr. Barton," said Dr. Thistlewood, preparing to rise, "I'm very much obliged to you for your information. It's precisely little symptoms like these which help us in a case like this to see how much, and what kind of nervous disturbance tends to persist in a patient even after the medicine of a good long sleep, and how most expeditiously we may help her to get rid of the remains of it."

"And now," said Mr. Barton, "may I ask you a question in return? Miss Vivian is no worse, is she, than she was when I saw her yesterday? My own little visit, I trust, did not unduly tire her."

"As to the general future of Miss Vivian's health," said Dr. Thistlewood, "there is, let me assure you, no danger of any kind; but we mustn't let her waste her youth in being ill longer than necessary. For some days she must be kept perfectly quiet; and, though her friends, secular and spiritual, will no doubt miss her company, they need feel no anxiety about herself."

Mr. Barton, when Dr. Thistlewood had gone, felt himself on the whole not displeased with this interview. His beloved one had not suffered from the agitations of yesterday; and, if it were necessary that she should remain quiet for a day or two, he felt that he could bear, and indeed welcome the interval, as enabling him to discuss with her aunt the practical details of the situation. He hardly dreaded a rebuff on Lady Susannah's part, but there might be minor difficulties. These should be got over. Nothing in the world should baffle him; but he, nevertheless, was racked by anxiety till the evening, when Lady Susannah's answer was at last put into his hands. The first words of it were sufficient to elicit from him a sigh of relief.

"My dear Mr. Barton," she wrote, "I quite understand how things have happened. I have always myself approved of clergymen marrying. I have several clergymen-cousins, and they all have very nice wives. You deserve one just as nice, and I should like to think that you had found one by my means. Also I could wish nothing better for Nest than a husband who would make her happy."

Mr. Barton, who received this just as he was beginning his dinner, laid the letter down as soon as he had got thus far; and, with unexpected appetite, swallowed some lentil soup. Then he resumed his reading.

"There are, however," Lady Susannah proceeded, "several

reasons why happiness would be very doubtful for you. I ought to tell you plainly, for one thing, that this poor child's parentage is most unfortunate. Her father—I will, Mr. Barton, give you confidence for confidence, and tell you that in early days it was once possible that I might have married him—her father is under a cloud, and cannot show his face in England; and the lady whom he did marry is a divorcée, with a husband living. But there are other difficulties quite apart from all this, relating to dear Nest herself; and these may, I fear, prove a yet greater obstacle to your wishes.

"Dr. Thistlewood, who knows nothing about what you tell me, said to me only this morning, 'If she were but as strong now as I hope we shall see her some day, a reasonably happy marriage would probably be the best thing for her; but she hasn't enough stability yet, as she and her husband, if she had one, would both discover to their cost. Let her wait three years,' he said. 'Things will be different then; and even then she'll be no more than a girl.' He's seen her again this afternoon, and he's coming again to-morrow morning. By the middle of the day I shall be able to tell you more; and if I can hold out to you any immediate hope, I will. But if you are serious in the matter, you must be very, very patient. And you must, if you please, remember her unfortunate connections. Nothing can alter these."

The first effect on Mr. Barton of this concluding portion of the letter was like that of a physical blow; but a second reading of it roused rather than discouraged him. Starting from the table he dashed off a hasty note, telling his servant that somebody must take it to Cliff's End forthwith.

"If I have to wait," he wrote, "I will wait as Jacob waited; but no external circumstances, however unfortunate, would for me be any obstacle—hardly even a drawback. I shall look out with impatience for your promised letter to-morrow; but do not think that I resign or even lessen my hopes."

The letter did not arrive till late the following afternoon.

"DEAR MR. BARTON" (it ran),

"I could not write to you earlier; for this morning things seemed so doubtful, and we have had a very busy day. Nest's condition has turned out to be such that Dr. Thistlewood is—I won't say alarmed; for there's no question of danger—it's only a question of time—but unless she was to run the risk of being laid up for many months, he insisted that she ought instantly to be removed to new surroundings, and kept absolutely quiet. Her father has telegraphed his most emphatic concurrence. None of her friends are to see her, or even know where she is. Dr.

Thistlewood was to manage everything. Nest left us at two o'clock to-day. She was not looking ill—merely languid and acquiescent. Everything was arranged beautifully—nurses, reserved compartment, and so on. For to-night—I may tell you this—she is to be at a home of rest belonging to Dr. Thistlewood in Gloucestershire; but her parents have expressly desired that, until she is quite well, her subsequent whereabouts shall not be communicated to anybody. There is every prospect of our having her back in a month or so. Please be patient till then.

"In order that you may not worry yourself more than the occasion requires, I may as well tell you that something of this kind was foreseen by Nest's parents as a possible occurrence from the first. If Nest's health ever made it desirable that she should leave me, I promised that, during her absence, I would take in Enid Wynn—the other one, the half sister. Indeed, all the winter there have been boxes of Enid's clothes locked up in a cupboard, so as to be ready for her in case she came. This young person will probably arrive next week. When I think of what I suspect to be her history—though it's not her fault—I confess I feel rather nervous. One thing, Mr. Barton, without betraying any confidences (for I have received none) I may say to you, by way of a hint. Since such a point is made of keeping these two girls apart, it seems likely that Nest is, for a time, going back to her parents. Hence the anxiety that Enid shall be safe in my charge first. I would, therefore, suggest that, if you want to learn anything about Nest more than I have been able to tell you, you should apply, not to me, but to her father, Captain Rhyss Wynn Vivian, Villa Orloff, Cimiez, Nice.

"Any day you like to call, I shall of course be delighted to see you. Meanwhile, don't make too much of a malady which, however we may deplore it, would be only serious if it were neglected. Don't be angry with the plain speaking of one who may, after all, some day call herself your relation, Susannah Lipscombe."

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

Mr. Barton was stupefied by this hardly credible news, and the kindly and equable tone in which Lady Susannah communicated it merely made matters worse. Such a tone no doubt might have done much to relieve him, had he really felt serious alarm with regard to Miss Vivian's health; but he did not. Convinced as he was by the language of Dr. Thistlewood himself that her general health was in no danger whatever, he accepted her present condition, whatever might be the medical name for it, as a sad, a pathetic, but merely passing infirmity; and the manner in which her weakness had sought his strength, and had thus in a moment revealed two souls to each other, had opened his eyes to the direction in which the true remedy lay. His support would do more for her than the treatment of any doctor, and the plea that she required a rest-cure which necessitated her immediate removal—as though rest were impossible in the quietude of her aunt's home—was merely an excuse for removing her from his own influence.

Thus did he begin to reason with a morbid and self-tormenting ingenuity, till he became in his own eyes the victim of some monstrous plot, which was directed against Miss Vivian also. Who was the prime mover in it was beyond his consistent guessing. Could it be Sir Rawlin Stantor? And was Dr. Thistlewood in league with him for some infamous purpose? Or could it be the girl's parents, who perhaps looked on Mr. Barton as no fit match for his daughter? And was Lady Susannah really in secret league with them? This last question, as soon as he caught himself asking it, did something to sober him, by showing him its own absurdity; and yet, could he that same evening have been a hidden listener in the dining-room at Cliff's End, and heard how lightly the girl's departure was discussed by her own relations, there were no suspicions so fantastic in their bitterness, that they might not have found harbour in his mind, and interpreted the whole course of the conversation as an implied mockery of himself.

Mr. Carlton would in that case, have figured as the first offender.

"Well, my dear Susie," he said, looking up from his soup, "in our young days little girls with attacks of nerves weren't humoured as they are to-day. If they ventured to be fanciful they were locked up in the schoolroom—you remember the martial law of Duchess Fanny at Collingham—and they had to eat cold rice pudding off the nursery governess's writing-table. Poor little Nest—I'm sure to lose her is like losing a bowl of flowers. And if she's coddled it's no fault of her own. But I can't help thinking that parents in the present generation make some maladies worse by paying too much attention to them."

"I'm afraid," said Lady Susannah, "that in Nest's case there's something rather more than fancy. Anyhow, though I'm sorry to lose her for even a few weeks, I'm glad to think that her parents, and a great physician like Dr. Thistlewood, have taken the responsibility off my hands. Dr. Thistlewood is really a wonderful man. That nurse, who is one of his staff—she arrived at Lord Cotswold's yesterday, as if by magic—a thoroughly superior woman. I gave her tea in my boudoir."

"Yes," said Mr. Carlton, "I caught a glimpse of her in the hall—a sensible sober person. It was quite refreshing to see her—so different from those trolloping females—too dreadful, I call them—you know the modern nurse. At Easton the other day there were two of them, looking after poor dear Caroline, and when they were not on duty—this is a literal fact—they used to go flaunting arm-in-arm together along the corridor—giggling, my dear—giggling, quite out loud. If my dearest mother could have seen it, I think she would have had a fit. It's a comfort to think that Nest has got somebody of the right sort. Her parents are so wise, if she's got to have a rest-cure at all, in sending her off like this under sealed orders. But the person, my dear Susie, whom I look upon as the best person of all is yourself. It's no good of you, while Nest's away, to take in the other young person—and at a moment's notice too. You haven't, I suppose, heard yet on what day you're to expect her?"

"No," said Lady Susannah, with a look of half-humorous resignation. "Here again I have had to leave myself in Dr. Thistlewood's hands. He's going to Malvern to-morrow, to finish his arrangements about Nest. My own impression is that her parents will want to have her near them—perhaps under the care of Dr. Gonteau, her old doctor—where she won't have anything to remind her of that dreadful thunderstorm. Anyhow, Dr. Thistlewood will see that the best is done for her; and as for Enid, if he finds when he gets to Malvern that she is, as he expects, on her way to England

already, he'll try to meet her in London, or else at Bristol, and bring her back with him."

Oswald and Mr. Hugo had been listening with considerable interest. Both the diplomat and the man of science having, in their several ways, secretly suffered from Miss Vivian's disregard of their sentiments, felt that the temporary loss of her might prove to be a blessing in disguise, by bringing them another young lady who would possibly be more appreciative. Oswald judged that the dignity recently achieved by him of having his life blighted by a passion for a married woman, would greatly enhance his attractions in the eyes of an unmarried girl; and as for Mr. Hugo, he had been preparing himself for his new cousin by dismissing her sister's malady as a mere piece of nervous silliness.

"Enid," he said solemnly, as soon as Lady Susannah had come to an end of her information, "is a very sensible name."

"Yes," said Oswald, in a tone of condescending banter. "It begins with the same sacred letter as Elvira."

Oswald, having received that morning a letter from Lady Conway, was in that happy condition which prompts successful lovers to regard the loves of others as the objects of a placid merriment. Mr. Hugo scowled and pretended to read the menu.

"Mr. Hugo," said Miss Arundel, "why are you making such an exceedingly fractious face? There's a melon coming. I ordered it this morning on purpose to make you good, and it cost elevenpence halfpenny."

Miss Arundel had once studied for three months at a cookery school, and prided herself on the ingenious economy with which she managed to feed her kindred. For this reason, as Sir Rawlin Stantor had divined, she was the frequent butt of her brothers, who, forgetting their feud, now joined in an attack on her.

"Nest," began Mr. Hugo, "even if she is not very wise, could at all events do one thing. She could write a menu fit for a gentleman to read. When I have a house of my own," Mr. Hugo continued, his prospective income being four hundred a year, "I shall have a servant specially to look after things like that."

"A menu of Nina's," said Oswald, "is like a series of dish-covers, which conceal, instead of revealing, the nature of what we're going to eat. Look here, Cousin George, let me just read you this. 'Soup—fish—minced meat in shells.' What comes next? I suppose it will be, 'Skin—bones.' My dear Nina, you had much better do it in French. 'Purée anonyme—poisson, bon marché—Petits debris de quelquechose—Morceaux assortis, à la chat.' Do you know, Cousin George, I'm always telling Nina that if one day her heart is cut open like Queen Mary's, we shan't find Calais written on it. We shall find 'Keep down the house books.'"

"And if Oswald's heart is cut open," said Mr. Hugo, who had only deferred his revenge, and whose repartees were simple but rather pointed, "what we shall find there will be 'Lady Conway.'"

"Come, come," said Lady Susannah, "don't you two boys talk nonsense. What would your cousin Enid think if she heard you sparring like this?"

"Yes," Mr. Carlton continued, hastening to improve the occasion, "and that reminds me there's another thing which your aunt Susie was going to tell you. The parents of your cousins won't say how or why—so right they are—I wish there were more like them—but between these girls some one has made mischief. Well—don't, if you can avoid it, talk about Nest to Enid, or even let out that she's been here. Enid, apparently, has no suspicion of the fact, so you two young men be discreet, and don't run the risk of stirring up unpleasant feelings by alluding to it. I can trust to Oswald's tact; but I should not feel quite sure of Hugo if he weren't so old for his years. Men of science wouldn't have been burnt and imprisoned if they hadn't said things which they'd better have kept to themselves."

Mr. Hugo's baby countenance acknowledged this compliment with smiles.

"I think," he replied, "I can promise, about a minor matter like this, to be less outspoken than Galileo. Nina, I should like some melon."

Mr. Barton at this moment was beginning the composition of a letter, which Lady Susannah received the following morning.

"Your news," he wrote, "has so astonished me that I can hardly take it in. You personally, I gather, have had no voice in the matter; you have not suggested her removal as a means of separating her from me. I sincerely believe you to be my friend. But I will not weary you with what I feel on my own account; this would perhaps not mean much to you. I will speak only about a trouble which you yourself will share with me. I refer to her coming Confirmation and her first Communion, for which she was so carefully preparing herself. She was coming to our Lord with the heart of an untainted child. And now, if I may judge from what you yourself have so emphatically told me, she has been placed out of reach of any religious guidance whatsoever; the means of grace have been literally snatched away from her; and at this very moment, according to your own showing, one or other of two things will be happening to her. She will either be under the care of parents who, although they are legally married, are, as you and I know, living in a state of deadly sin, and are desecrating a most holy sacrament in the entire conduct of their lives; or else, if she

is taken elsewhere, under whose care will she be? She will be under the care of the dependents of a sceptical doctor, who does not perhaps deny that a soul exists—but for whom our faith means nothing, because he has closed his eyes to it, and, like all such men, hates it in his heart of hearts. The atmosphere of open sin is hardly so deadly for the young conscience as this atmosphere of cynical indifference. Think, Lady Susannah—think. A human soul committed to our joint care—what can you or I ever give in exchange for it? And what good reason, I ask you, is there for this removal? So far as I can see, none. On Dr. Thistlewood's own admission—for he spoke to me about the matter personally—her present indisposition is not even remotely dangerous. There must be some other reason in the background. Cannot you suggest to me what it is? Does Dr. Thistlewood, in the interest of her parents, or perhaps of some other person, desire to come between us? Or is there—for such things have been—any darker plot? But I won't ask that. I hardly know what I write or think. Dear Lady Susannah, you are a good woman, and I believe you to be my kind friend. I will trouble you with no more questions till I have seen Dr. Thistlewood himself. I shall go to him to-morrow morning, and if I can extort from him no satisfactory answer, I will throw myself on your goodness, and ask you to give me what help you can. You can surely do, or at all events tell me, something. Yours,

"THEOPHILUS BARTON."

True to the resolution expressed at the close of this painful letter, Mr. Barton, at an early hour next morning, despatched a note to Dr. Thistlewood, in which he begged for an immediate interview with him, about business of the utmost moment.

But a message was brought back to him to the effect that Dr. Thistlewood was away, and would not return till to-morrow or the day following. Then, condemned to all the agonies of suspense, he would have written again to Lady Susannah, or would have called on her, if he had not been withheld by a sort of tragic shyness. He believed that he had her sympathy, but he did not know how completely; and her sympathy, if lukewarm, would wound him far more than her antagonism.

That day, in any case, had he seen her, she could have told him nothing. Next morning, however, a letter from Dr. Thistlewood reached her, which produced an immediate excitement amongst the whole of the Cliff's End household.

"All our arrangements for your invalid," he wrote, "have been carried out most satisfactorily. You may be assured that she will be under care as affectionate and judicious as your own. Her sister,

your new visitor, will be at Malvern to-morrow. She will spend the night there under the charge of Mrs. Grey, my matron—partly for the sake of rest, and partly for the sake of something which young ladies, when they don't want rest-cures, think even more important. Both these sisters, it seems, are equally particular about their clothes. Miss Enid comes trusting in those boxes which are lying at Cliff's End ready for her. Amongst these boxes is a small one covered with green canvas, and containing, as I gather, a travelling dress, and I know not what besides. Pray send this by the first possible train, addressed to Mrs. Grey's care. The young lady, I take it, will refuse to appear among you, until she is in a position to make a suitable first impression; and she has nothing with her which she considers entirely suitable. She's quite accustomed to travelling, having been in England, Scotland, and Egypt. Still I will wait and come down with her, and bring her with me to your own door. And here let me take the opportunity of making a small practical suggestion to you. I have already begged that, for the sake of peace and quietness, you will advise your own family to say nothing to Miss Enid about her sister, and it would be well, I think, if you gave the same caution to Mr. Barton. He would take it better from you than he probably would from me. This being so, my present suggestion is that, since Miss Vivian was, as I am given to understand, a great reader both of religious books and of poetry, and has doubtless left in her sitting-room many volumes with her own name in them, you should, during her absence, put these possessions away. I am not authorized to explain the nature of the difference between the sisters, but I am not betraying the confidence which the parents have thought fit to repose in me, if I tell you that it originates in circumstances for which neither of these young people is in any measure responsible. I feel sure that you will be glad to know this. As soon as I can, I will telegraph the important moment when I shall have the honour of presenting you with a new niece. Yours, with respectful sincerity,

"Gustav Thistlewood."

The duty of putting away Miss Vivian's private belongings provided Miss Arundel with an occasion for much congenial activity, and the not unpleasant mystery which made this precaution desirable, filled Mr. Hugo and Oswald with a subtle sense of holiday. They felt indeed so much disinclined for any of their usual occupations, that most of the afternoon was spent by them in the absorbing sport of pursuing three strange cats which had invaded the Cliff's End garden, and taking shots at them with a catapult of Mr. Hugo's own invention.

Lady Susannah, meanwhile, whose early disappointment in love

was now disposing her towards sympathy with all unfortunate lovers, had despatched as early as possible a kindly letter to Mr. Barton. His attachment to her niece by no means itself displeased her. She had been touched and drawn towards him by the simplicity with which he avowed it. But her kindliness, flavoured by a sense of some possible future relationship, seemed to carry with it a right to advise and chasten; and Mr. Barton's attachment being, for the present at all events, one which could advance itself to no practical conclusion, she was anxious, whilst showing him that she quite understood his feelings, to insinuate that a sensible man ought to exercise some control over them. "I quite agree with you," she wrote, "that the postponement of Nest's Confirmation makes this illness of hers especially sad and unfortunate. But you have done all you can. You will help nobody by distressing yourself; and in a very few weeks we may hope that she will be given back to us. Don't mope. Come and see us at tea to-morrow. If you come rather late you will probably meet Enid Wynn, the sister. She ought to interest you because of her connection with Nest; and afterwards you and I can have a little talk in private. I want to give you a caution with regard to your conversation with Enid. If you wish to look on me some day as an aunt, you must allow me to anticipate an aunt's privileges and advise you."

Mr. Barton divined, as he read this—and he divined quite correctly—that the depths of his own passion were beyond Lady Susannah's comprehension; but he divined at the same time the sincerity of her good-will towards him, and the effect on his spirits of her last sentence was magical. It was like a touch of cool ointment applied to a smarting wound. He had, moreover, discovered by this time a source of consolation through his own unassisted reasonings. It was impossible, he concluded, though he often had thought the contrary, that Dr. Thistlewood, at the time of his inquiry about the details of Miss Vivian's behaviour, could have known or even suspected the attachment between herself and him. Nothing, however, could weaken his conviction that Miss Vivian's attachment to himself was somehow at the bottom of what to him was her otherwise inexplicable removal, and that of this removal Dr. Thistlewood was the primary instigator. But how could Dr. Thistlewood have found such a fact out? The answer, when at last he thought of it, was overwhelming in its clear simplicity, Miss Vivian in her helpless condition, must have confided the secret to him herself. He could see her lying weak and exhausted on a sofa, turning her beautiful and now helpless eyes to the masterful physician, and surrendering to him with angelic simplicity the holy secret which at once sustained and agitated that frail vessel, her body. The pathos of the imagined scene rendered her doubly and trebly dear to him.

The affection with which he enfolded her turned into three affections —the adoration of the lover, the solicitude of the servant of Christ, and the yearning of the mother for the little helpless child; and from this triple communion with her something besides developed itself— a fiery confidence in his future and hers, and a cool resolve that on the first favourable opportunity he would extort from Dr. Thistlewood's own lips a full account of his proceedings, of the whereabouts and condition of his patient, and of the nature and the probable duration of those obstacles, if any, which made a separation between her and her future husband imperative. For the present he was doomed to inaction, and meanwhile events moved on.

CHAPTER II

Shortly after five o'clock the door-bell at Cliff's End gave a resounding peal. Lady Susannah, who was in the drawing-room together with her family party, rose with an odd timidity which was almost like distress, and made her way into the hall. Mr. Hugo looked as though he would like to follow her, but Mr. Carlton, with the air of an elderly governess, enunciated his opinion that the new-comer would be shy, and had better be left to the welcome of her aunt alone—advice which he emphasized by slipping into the hall himself, and finding a position half-way up the staircase, whence the whole drama of arrival could be clearly and unobtrusively witnessed. The front door was open. There was already a little bustle in the porch, and beyond the porch Dr. Thistlewood, in a hooded cloak, was saying good-bye to somebody whom Mr. Carlton could not yet see. "I can't come in," he could hear Dr. Thistlewood saying; "but tell your aunt that I've brought you faithfully to her door, and don't forget, young lady, the good advice that I've given you." Mr. Carlton heard the clear reply of a speaker still out of view. It might have come, he thought, from an amicable but slightly impertinent school boy. "Don't you trouble yourself." This is what the voice said. "One would fancy, to hear you talk, you knew pretty well all about me." "Not all," said Dr. Thistlewood, with a pleasant laugh of comradeship, "but more perhaps than you suppose. Well, good-bye, I can't wait a moment longer. I'll come and see your aunt to-morrow."

Then came a process of hand-shaking, which drew the concealed speaker into the field of Mr. Carlton's vision. "Thanks, awfully," she said, as Dr. Thistlewood disappeared into a carriage; and now Mr. Carlton, though his attention was somewhat distracted by the movements of a couple of servants who were busy with some articles of luggage, was able to form an idea as to what sort of stranger had come to them. He found himself watching a figure having the outlines of a graceful girl, and the deportment of an independent boy—a figure which paused in its advance towards the hall door to administer a passing reproof to a kneeling and perturbed footman. "Gently, man, gently with that old bundle of rugs." Mr. Carlton

caught the words. "You're dropping the magazines and papers all over the shop."

A moment later Lady Susannah came forward, and Mr. Carlton discreetly tiptoed back to the drawing-room.

"Enid," said Lady Susannah, kindly, but with a certain effort. "My dear, I am glad to see you."

Accompanied by a little Spitz dog the young lady advanced, looked at the friend who welcomed her, and then threw her arms brusquely round Lady Susannah's neck.

"It's awfully good of you having me here like this," she said. "I always heard from father you were quite one of the best. Do you mind my giving you a kiss? I hope I'm not too presuming."

Lady Susannah returned the salute with tenderness, and when this process was over there were traces of moisture in her eyes.

When the stranger entered the drawing-room from the twilight that was perennial in the hall, her likeness to Miss Vivian, and her difference from her, both became equally apparent. Their figures were somewhat, their features were closely, similar, and indeed recalled to Lady Susannah Dr. Thistlewood's discourse on twins. But the likeness ended there. Every movement of Miss Vivian's was instinct with something that was not male. The frou-frou of her skirts, the belts that accentuated her waist, her furs softly scented, the delicacy of her gloves and boots—all seemed a part of herself. She had hardly a characteristic which would not in a man be monstrous. Miss Enid wore little that a man might not have worn as well. She had on her head a hard wideawake hat. Her white collar was stiff. Her necktie had a horseshoe pin in it. Her gloves were of loose thick doe-skin, and, to put the whole matter in a nutshell, her dress of plain brown cloth, beautifully fitting though it was, seemed making a piquant apology for consenting to end in skirts. Her voice, moreover, though otherwise not unlike Miss Vivian's, was, nevertheless, a good half tone lower.

She greeted her new relations with a frank grasp of the hand, and a nod of composed good-fellowship, though in Mr. Carlton's case these rites were retarded by a moment's appraising inspection of his rings and his little high-heeled feet. Then, on Lady Susannah's suggesting that she had better come to the tea-table, she tore off her gloves, tossed them contemptuously on to a sofa, and observed that, the room being hot, she proposed to take off her coat. Oswald was at once at her service, begging her to accept his help.

"Thanks, dear boy!" she said equably. "Peel it off if you can. One, two, three—now for a good pull. Thanks, once more. Now chuck it down anywhere."

Lady Susannah felt herself to be listening to a new species of language, and making acquaintance with a new code of gesture.

Both, besides being a surprise to her, were a shock to her old-fashioned prejudices, and yet the quiet self-possession of the stranger, the absence of any doubt on her part that each phrase she used was the right one, and the sweetness of her low-toned voice, which formed an amusing contrast to the uses which its owner made of it, did much towards turning into indulgence the criticism which they united to provoke.

"Now," said Lady Susannah, "I've no doubt you're hungry. Here's your tea, and here are muffins, toast, sandwiches, Devonshire cream. I'll leave you to help yourself. I hope you had a pleasant journey."

"Devonshire cream!" said Miss Enid. "I must sample that. I never saw it before. Yes, Aunt Susannah, the journey itself was right enough, only at Bristol, where we'd got to change, we'd a *mauvais quart d'heure* on the platform. The whole place from end to end was as black as your hat with excursionists. When our own train came in it was all we could do to get to our reserved compartment. Dr. Thistlewood's as strong as they make 'em, but even he was a bit hustled, and as for the porter, they nearly squeezed his inside out. I felt," she continued, as everybody seemed inclined to listen to her, "for all the world as if I were at good old Cairo, where fifty Arabs in night-shirts fight over one dressing-bag, and the next moment, for anything you can tell, it may be at Mecca. Before I knew better I fancied myself rather smart for discovering that the scarecrow who grabbed mine first was Hassan. Imagine my feelings on discovering that they were all Hassans—every man Jack of them. Look here," she said, turning confidentially to Mr. Hugo, who with some naïve adroitness had managed to sit down next her. "I didn't quite catch your name, though I know that your brother's called Oswald. What's yours? Well, don't be in a hurry. Think it over and tell me to-morrow; and meanwhile give me a bit more cream."

"I see," said Miss Arundel, "you've a dear little dog of your own. We must introduce it to James. What's its name? May it have some milk?"

"Yes, if you like," Miss Enid replied carelessly. "Where's the little brute got to? Father insisted on having it sent after me. But it's not worth a ——" Oswald divined that she was going to say "a damn;" but she changed the phrase in time. "It is not," she said, "worth anything. There isn't a bit of sport in it. I tried it at home, and it would not even kill a sparrow."

An expression of shocked surprise was visible on Lady Susannah's face.

"Dr. Thistlewood," she said coldly, "tells us you're quite a traveller. You've been in England before."

"Yes," said Miss Enid. "I was once for a month at Harborough. This place is better to look at. I could almost fancy I was at Nice. I suppose, however, there's no hunting hereabouts—I dare say no sport of any kind—except," she added, after a moment's reflection, "rats."

"What!" exclaimed Lady Susannah; "what should make you think of rats? I'm happy to say that in this house there's not a rat to be caught by anybody."

"No," said Miss Enid. "But, coming down in the train, Dr. Thistlewood told me that the basement of Lord Cotswold's castle was crawling with them; and if I could raise a terrier, he said, he'd be thankful if I would have a go at them."

Lady Susannah shook her head. "I hope, my dear," she said, smiling, "you're not going to be cruel. Come, if you've done your tea, you'll like to be shown your rooms. Nina, will you take her?"

"Certainly," said Miss Arundel, with alacrity. "Enid, are you ready?"

"Right you are," replied Miss Enid; and the cousins had risen to go, when the door was opened, and the butler ushered in Mr. Barton, preternaturally grave, but affecting a slight smile.

"Here, you—Oswald," Miss Enid was saying over her shoulder as Mr. Barton advanced, "be a good fellow. Pitch us my coat and gloves. Now, Nina, lead the way."

She was in the act of catching her possessions when she found the new visitor staring at her, to which attention she replied by a quick but comprehensive survey of him. Lady Susannah was in the act of calling her back, with a view to making her and Mr. Barton acquainted, but the impulse came too late—Miss Arundel and she were gone.

"I hope," said Miss Enid, as soon as they were safe outside, "that that individual will know me again when he sees me. Who is he? He looks as if he'd swallowed the poker."

Miss Arundel explained that Mr. Barton was a clergyman, a friend, and a neighbour.

"Have you many in these parts built that way?" asked Miss Enid, as they climbed the stairs. "The only English parson I've ever seen to speak to was a ripping little fellow in Northamptonshire, who hunted three days a week, and would take a toss without turning a hair. The poor people about him worshipped the very ground he trod on, and you'd never have guessed what he was if it hadn't been for a bit of necktie. What! am I to live down this very snug little passage? And your aunt spoke about rooms. Is she going to give me two? This is doing me well. What's in here? The bedroom?"

Miss Vivian's maid, a discreet elderly woman, who had—it was

so arranged at Dr. Thistlewood's express suggestion—been left to attend Miss Enid, was busy setting out a pair of plain ivory brushes, and some other toilet appliances equally plain, on the dressing-table.

"I hope you'll be comfortable," said Miss Arundel, kindly.

Miss Enid looked at her with a laugh, and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Comfortable!" she said. "I should rather think I should be. But, Nina, let me breathe it in your ear—all these frills and flounces, and ornaments and satin bows, make me feel like a bull being put to bed in a china-shop. Don't think me a beast for having popped it out like that. Aunt Susannah's awfully good to me. And now let's have a squint at the sitting-room."

In the sitting-room was a lamp, and a fire was brightly blazing. All Miss Vivian's books, and other traces of personal occupation, had been removed, but everything else was arranged precisely as she had left it, and there still clung to the curtains a fragrance scarcely perceptible, which was due to sundry burnings of Mr. Barton's incense. Miss Enid sniffed a little, and glanced at the walls and furniture.

"If these were to be my permanent diggings," she said, "I should want all these walls for my fishing-rods. You'll think me an absolute Goth, my dear, but I should clap those china brackets in a cupboard. All the same, I couldn't better the chairs. But, Nina, dear girl, there's a crucifix, and a saint's picture, and a *prie-dieu*. They remind me of the convent school."

"Were you brought up in a convent?" asked Miss Arundel, with some curiosity.

"Yes," said Miss Enid, "for my sins I was; but of course only when I was a kid. They weren't bad beasts in their own way—some of the sisters. But what are those things doing here? Are you all of you holy Romans? And that black man downstairs who made a face at me—perhaps he was the genuine article?"

Miss Arundel assured her that Mr. Barton, like Lady Susannah and herself, were members of the same Church as the hunting parson of Northamptonshire, and that Mr. Barton would be horrified at the supposition that crucifixes and pictures of saints were not even more in place in an Anglican household than in a Roman. "And you," she went on, "from the way in which you speak about the convent, I suppose that you belong to the English Church too?"

Miss Enid scrutinized her with a sort of humorous hesitation. "Well, my dear," she said, "I certainly belong to nothing else. And now let me ask you one thing. Don't you think that, before we go downstairs, we might open the window, and have this bower of luxury aired a bit? It may be only my fancy, but to me the place smells like a pole-cat."

"Perhaps," said Miss Arundel, "it may be a trifle stuffy. Well, we'll do as you say. And now you shall see the schoolroom."

The schoolroom, where Mr. Hugo, still thinking of his new cousin, was consoling himself for her disappearance by severe preoccupation with his microscope, was much more to Miss Enid's taste than the elegance of her own apartment.

"One can breathe here," she exclaimed. "This is the place for me."

Mr. Hugo looked up delighted; but with some effort of will he consulted his dignity as a sage by not abandoning his apparatus for a trifle like a mere girl. He summoned a weighty frown, and became more preoccupied than ever. Miss Enid Wynn rewarded him by an immediate approach to his table.

"What have you got in there?" she said. "Let me have a peep —do."

Mr. Hugo looked up again, and beamed condescending approval on this dawn of scientific intelligence in a quite unexpected quarter.

"Wait a moment," he said, as he delicately turned a screw, "till I've got the object into something like proper position. What's in there is a toad's eye. Now sit down, and if the focus is wrong you can alter it."

"Well, Enid," said Miss Arundel, "I shall leave you here. You'll be able to find your way to your own room at dressing-time."

Miss Enid, meanwhile, was beginning to peer through the eyepiece of the instrument.

"All right, Nina," she said. "Look here, Mr. Hugo—I haven't got the focus yet. Am I turning the right screw? How does the little devil work? No, don't touch me. It's coming. Ah, isn't that jolly!"

Mr. Hugo's delight increased as he watched his promising pupil, and his hand hovered over her shoulder like a moth that desired to pitch on it. This consummation, however, was hindered partly by his own shyness, partly by the entrance of Oswald, which a frown on Mr. Hugo's brow showed that he regarded as the worst form of intrusion. As for Oswald himself, he had just come in from the garden, where he had begun the composition of a poem of which Miss Enid Wynn was the occasion.

> "Your heart is fresh as morning dew,
> But mine is bitterer than the sea."

He had accomplished these lines, and the rest of the poem was to lead up to them; but, the requisite rhymes and sentiments being somewhat slow in presenting themselves, a spirit in his feet led him to look for the being whose freshness formed such a contrast to his own blighted maturity. The charms of a young hoyden like this, with a

soul that could stoop to rat-catching, could not possibly endanger—so he told himself—his fatal loyalty to Lady Conway. Still, like many lovers of very much more experience, he felt that though his loyalty to one lady was inviolable, it was only due to himself that others should attempt to undermine it, and he was now in quest of a temptation which he would, of course, resist.

Oswald's instincts in matters like these were admirable. He would have been horrified had he realized how closely they resembled those of Mr. Hugo. Without seeming to notice that Miss Enid was present, he went to the cupboard in which he kept his portfolio of caricatures, and, opening it on the central table, became seemingly lost in a search for some particular picture. His tactics were presently successful, for as soon as Miss Enid had had enough of the spectacle of the toad's eye, she rose from her chair and cautiously approached the artist, leaving poor Mr. Hugo to affect a profound indifference, the only result of which was the breaking of his slide as he extracted it.

"Oh," said Miss Enid, carelessly, with her arms akimbo, "are all those pretty pictures yours?"

"Yes," said Oswald, assuming an air of profound abstraction, but at the same time adroitly spreading some of the drawings over the table. "They are only scribbles of mine. I was seeing if I'd lost a letter amongst them."

Miss Enid took up a drawing, and broke into a pleasant laugh. "This is good!" she exclaimed. "I see you're a regular dab at it. Are these some of the Southquay freaks?"

"What have you got hold of?" said Oswald. "Oh, that's a Mrs. Morriston Campbell, and her dried-up stick of a husband."

Miss Enid next took up one of Oswald's romantic love-scenes, in which a lady on a balcony was listening to a moon-lit troubadour.

"Here's a party," she said, "who seems to be a trifle sorry for herself. You've made her look as if she had a pain in her tummy."

This piece of profane criticism was heard by Mr. Hugo with rapture, and he immediately came over to the table to enjoy his brother's discomfiture; but Miss Enid had passed from the love-scene to some more of the caricatures, and was once again in a state of appreciation and interest. As the next best thing, therefore, to seeing Oswald's talents made light of, Mr. Hugo set about helping to do the honours of them himself.

"Oswald," he said, "show her the ones of Mr. Barton and Peter."

"Oh, do," cried Miss Enid, her eyes lighting up with mischief. "Mr. Barton's the sky-pilot, isn't he?—the bean-pole of a man who came stalking into the drawing-room, and looked at me—and looked at me—well, as if I was some one out of Noah's Ark? Is that him?

Nina tells me he's not a Roman; so what has he to do with Peter, or Pope either?"

"Our Peter," began Oswald, solemnly, "is not an apostle. He is a deity."

But this method of explanation was much too indirect for Mr. Hugo.

"Our Peter," he said, "is a beautiful Angora cat, and he cost seven pounds, and that's his altar, where we offer up lights and liver to him, and Oswald has invented a ritual for him, copied from Mr. Barton's; and—oh, Oswald—there, look there—there's one of the pictures. That's Mr. Barton preaching an offertory sermon for him."

The news that Peter was a cat rather puzzled than amused Miss Enid, until she had examined the pictures, when she grasped the situation instantly. As soon as she saw Mr. Barton depicted in full canonicals, she burst into a laugh that was delightful to the artist's vanity.

"Oh," she said, "this is ripping. Do let us have some more of them. As soon as I saw Mr. Barton, I thought he looked a first-rate rotter. You don't mean to say that he really rigs himself out like that! They've got to do it in France; but here I thought even clergymen were more sensible. Women in petticoats are bad enough. Men in petticoats are worse. I say, Mr. Hugo, I want to tell you a secret. I've got an Albanian dress with a kilt only down to there. It does make you feel so free. Do you think that if I wore it to-night, Aunt Susannah would go pop? It would make Mr. Barton sit up, wouldn't it? I must try it some day. I don't dare do it to-night."

Mr. Hugo, with wise reticence, whispered, "Keep that for Mr. Barton."

To Oswald this whispering and the whisperers seemed utterly beneath contempt, so, gathering his pictures together, he hastily left the room, taking his constancy to Lady Conway away with him, like a shield which had not received the honour of a single dent.

When dinner-time arrived, Miss Enid made her appearance in a long skirt, which was safe enough from any resemblance to a kilt; but she wore a sort of black jacket, so cut and so ornamented with silver buttons, as more or less to suggest the male fashion of the Scottish Highlands; whilst her hair was somehow arranged so as to look like a boy's, and was tied at the back with a knowing little black bow. Her manners before, and especially towards Lady Susannah, though in no way visibly constrained, were so naturally subdued and softened that Lady Susannah herself could find no new fault with her except that her language, her tastes, and even her dress were all a little peculiar. There was, moreover, something

in her spirits that everybody found catching—so much so, indeed, that in the drawing-room, when dinner was over, Mr. Carlton proposed the playing of some innocent round game. The game at length fixed upon was at all events innocent enough. Each player in turn named one of the four elements—fire, water, earth, and air—and challenged another to name, whilst the challenger counted ten, something which inhabited, or was, at any rate, specially connected with it. Thus Mr. Carlton himself was challenged with the element air. His answer by rights should have been some bird or insect; and he was held to have failed ignominiously because all he could think of was soda-water. Oswald did no better, when, air having been named again, he responded with cynical promptitude, "Women's promises."

"Oswald," gurgled his aunt, "you're really a little hard on us. But you must think of something that's alive. Now, Hugo, it's your turn. You give us an element."

Mr. Hugo looked round him with a solemn and superior smile, and, his eyes at last fixing themselves on his new cousin, he astonished the whole party by articulating the word "Carbon."

"My dear," said Lady Susannah, "carbon is not an element."

"It is," said Mr. Hugo, sententiously. "If it weren't for what I and others are now finding out about radium, we might still say that carbon was the great creator of life."

"It takes much more than an element, Hugo," said Lady Susannah, gravely, "to make even a sparrow. You shouldn't talk like that—not even in fun. It's not reverent."

Mr. Hugo, at this juncture, caught his new cousin's eye. It seemed to him that, in a cautious way, she winked at him. At all events she did something else. She surprised the assembly by joining in the discussion herself.

"Yes, Aunt Susannah," she said; "of course, if it comes to that, carbon alone will no more make life no more than air or water will. You want oxygen, hydrogen, and the whole group of albuminates."

"My dear child," exclaimed Lady Susannah, astounded, "where did you pick all this up?"

"Oh," said Miss Enid, modestly, "it's only what all boys know. Isn't it, Mr. Hugo?"

The young lady's familiarity with the profoundest facts of science went straight to Mr. Hugo's heart; but he was also a little jealous of it.

"I should," he replied, "hardly quite say that. It's what very few girls know at any rate."

"Most likely," she went on; "I seem to be an awful prig, but you see, Aunt Susannah, as soon as the nuns had done with me, I was taught something sensible by two friends of father's—by Dr.

Gonteau, and Professor Guggenheim—at Nice. Dr. Gonteau, as I suppose you know, is an old friend of Dr. Thistlewood's, and he often took me into his laboratory, and let me see him at work."

"And what," said Mr. Carlton, daintily, "did the other gentleman do—the gentleman with a charming name? He sounds like a chemist. I'm sure he made horrid smells."

"Wrong," said Miss Enid. "Go down one. Professor Guggenheim gave lectures on the origin of religion, and on the Bible, and on sacred books, and on Christianity."

A shadow of perplexed disapproval passed away from Lady Susannah's face.

"I'm glad," she said, "that you've had some regular religious instruction. But, as for the origin of religion, you can hardly have wanted a professor to tell you that."

"I say, Enid," said Mr. Hugo, when he was lighting her bedroom candle for her, "I'll show you something to-morrow. I am actually producing life with radium in a closed glass vessel."

CHAPTER III

NEXT morning Oswald had risen early, and gone out before breakfast into the garden to finish the poem in which he contrasted the heart of Miss Wynn with his own. He was thus occupied, when, at a turn of one of the paths, he came on Miss Wynn herself, wearing one of his own hats.

"Morning," she said, with a nod. "Is this your property I've been making free with?"

"It is," said Oswald, looking her full in the eyes. "That hat has known many airs and skies. It has had a long life, but it never lived till now."

"Oh," said Miss Wynn, composedly, "you know how to lay it on, I see. But I don't care for compliments, thank you. Compliments are all my eye."

"That," said the gallant Oswald, "is because you have had too many of them."

"Many or few," said Miss Wynn, "I can pretty well tell their value. This place is like Italy. Have you ever been to Italy?"

"Once," said Oswald, with a slight mysterious sigh. "I should like to go there again for the sake of old associations—which perhaps after all it hardly dares to think about. But I can't go—at least not now. I am called to a very different and much more distant place. I am expecting every week to be ordered out to Constantinople. I happen to be attached to the Embassy."

Miss Wynn looked at him with a respect which she had hardly evinced previously, and exchanged her bantering manner for a sort of soft sullenness.

"Well," she said, "if ever in your life you've done anything particularly rotten, I hope that at Constantinople you'll be sufficiently far away from it."

The word "rotten," as applied to any possible indiscretion of his own, seemed to Oswald contemptibly inappropriate. But what this girl meant was evident. She assumed that he was a man with a past. She was not without some penetration. She would never have spoken in this way to that babyish Mr. Hugo. The conversation was here disturbed abruptly by the loud ringing of a bell.

"That's not for breakfast," said Oswald, cynically. "It's for prayers."

"Does Aunt Susannah expect me?" asked Miss Wynn. "I don't mind going, if she does—anything for a quiet life. She doesn't? You're quite sure? Thank goodness for that!"

Oswald, who felt that, whatever might be the case with men, liberal opinions were more or less unbecoming in women, was slightly jarred by this utterance; and his original conclusion that there was a strange want in her nature was confirmed by the promptitude with which, when the party assembled in the dining-room, she deserted him altogether for his brother, with whom, on pretence of being helped by him to boil an egg on the sideboard, she soon seemed to be indulging in the concoction of some childish plot.

Subsequent events showed that such had been indeed the case. "Enid," Miss Arundel had said at the end of breakfast, with the air of a person proposing some bout of intoxicating dissipation, "would you like, in the course of the morning, to come and see my hens and chickens? I've got forty-seven, and nine of them have the gapes." And Miss Enid had replied that already Mr. Hugo and she had settled to go for a stroll, but would visit the hen-house on their return. The morning wore away, however, and the two were still missing; and when it was found at luncheon that both their chairs stood empty, Lady Susannah was beginning to experience grave alarm. It was not till nearly tea-time that the truants showed their faces again, and the history of their adventures was made plain in all its surprising enormity.

What had happened was this. Amongst Miss Enid's whisperings to Mr. Hugo in the dining-room had been the question, "I say, have you got a terrier?" Mr. Hugo somewhat shamefacedly had been obliged to admit he had not.

"Well," said Miss Enid, "no doubt Dr. Thistlewood has one. Can't we slope off to Lord Cotswold's, and have a good rat-hunt there?"

"Would you," asked Mr. Hugo, aghast at this bold proposal, "like that better than looking at my radium, and the beginnings of life in my bottle?"

"We'll see those in the evening," whispered Miss Enid insidiously, "when the others have gone to bed. I don't see why I should turn in at half-past ten."

Accordingly Mr. Hugo, in obedience to the stronger will, had set off with his companion, bound for the Turkish Castle.

"Now," she said, when they at last reached the portal, "don't be afraid of the bell. Pull it for all you're worth; or let me give a lug at it."

"Who shall we ask for?" inquired Mr. Hugo, timidly.

"Oh," said Miss Enid, "you leave all that to me. Look here," she went on to a footman, when the tall doors were opened, "will you tell Lord Cotswold that Miss Wynn and Mr. Hugo Arundel have come over to do the bit of rat-catching that Dr. Thistlewood spoke about."

The man looked at her doubtfully, and could hardly forbear from smiling.

"Yes," Miss Enid continued, "just look alive and find him. He'll know all about it. We'll wait here outside. And hi! there; I suppose they can raise a dog and ferret on the premises?"

"I'm sure I couldn't say, miss. I'll find Dr. Thistlewood and ask."

"Well, Mr. Hugo," said Miss Enid, "this is a rum sort of castle. It's just like a birthday cake with half the sugar melted."

Presently the footman returned, and, demeaning himself much more respectfully, said—

"His lordship is at home, miss, and begs that you will step this way."

"Ah," said Lord Cotswold, advancing, when the pair were shown into a library, "when age loses the privilege of going to look for youth, youth makes good the loss by coming to look for age. There's your friend, Dr. Thistlewood. We were talking about you just now. And how is our man of science? He seems to be a sportsman also. That's just as it should be. And now," he continued, "about the great business of the morning. Dr. Thistlewood knows of a cottager who has ferrets, and who lives close by. I've sent some one to find him, and bring him—if he's there to bring. And meanwhile, how shall we amuse ourselves?"

"I hope awfully," said Miss Enid, with an engaging and respectful courtesy, "that we're not putting you out. I thought from what he—Dr. Thistlewood—told me, that we could just have gone round to an outhouse, and had a whack at the rats without disturbing anybody."

"Miss Enid Wynn," said Dr. Thistlewood, who had been watching her with critical interest, "has scientific tastes as her cousin has. Yes, miss, I know from Dr. Gonteau that you were one of his pupils. Would you like to look at the place where the lightning struck the balcony?"

"What!" she exclaimed, "did the lightning strike this house? I like anything that's to do with electricity. May we really have a look at that?"

As they passed through the main drawing-room, Miss Enid caught sight of a man who was turning over some large books on a table, and who, as the party entered, looked up and fixed his eyes on her.

"I say," she whispered, administering a slight nudge to Dr. Thistlewood, "who's that? He looks like a swell of some sort."

Dr. Thistlewood replied that this person was Sir Rawlin Stantor, who at that moment was consulting some Government Blue Books, the property of Lord Cotswold. "Sir Rawlin," he continued, "you know this young lady's friends. This is Miss Enid Wynn. She's a student of electrical science, and we're going to show her the balcony."

"You just be quiet," she said; and, extending a hand to Sir Rawlin with the gesture of a frank schoolboy, "Ain't it a shame of him," she continued, "giving me away like that?"

Sir Rawlin's expression became grave, and then suddenly curious. "I will," he said, "come with you." And he followed the party to the tower.

The broken window had been mended; but otherwise the room, looking mean and tawdry in the daylight, was much as it had been on the memorable night of the party. The window was opened, and the girl went out on the balcony.

"Be careful not to fall," said Dr. Thistlewood, teasingly.

"Make yourself easy," Miss Enid retorted. "I say, Mr. Hugo, look how this rail's twisted. I only wish I'd been there to see it happen."

"I was there," said Sir Rawlin, "as near as I am now. I wonder if you would have begun to ask, as I did, 'For which of my misdemeanours is the lightning trying to get at me?'"

"I'm sure," said Miss Enid, bluntly, "you didn't do anything so stupid. Of course, I can see you're laughing. Well, if you didn't do that yourself, why do you think that I should? I was at Nice all through the last big earthquake. The priests said it was a judgment. A judgment on what? That's what I wished to ask them. It just toppled their churches over like so many old ninepins, and it didn't give even a jog to the Casino at Monte Carlo. Are girls in England brought up in such a silly way that they still take for gospel whatever their nurses tell them?"

"My young philosopher," said Lord Cotswold, "you reason as well as Lucretius; but the problems of life will wait, and the hours of this morning won't. Would you and your cousin like to go down into the yard? And if the dog and the ferrets have not yet made their appearance, you can amuse yourselves by examining the scene of your impending exploits."

Miss Enid replied with the pregnant words, "Thanks awfully."

The two were accordingly sent off under the care of a servant; and, Lord Cotswold having said that he expected them to stay for luncheon, they came back in an hour covered with dust and victory. Mr. Hugo, indeed, was so hung with cobwebs that his face gave

little clue to his identity, or even his age or sex. Dr. Thistlewood, who encountered them at the top of the back stairs, had Mr. Hugo at once taken off to a dressing-room, and then turned to Miss Enid, who was keeping herself somewhat in the background. He discovered that victory in her case had not been bought for nothing. She had suffered a severe though not a dangerous wound from a nail which had scratched her arm, or rather torn it, above the wrist. A bandage, made out of her own and Mr. Hugo's handkerchiefs, was already getting pink with the blood that was soaking through; the result being that she had to put her pride in her pocket, and ask in unwilling accents for Dr. Thistlewood's aid.

"I told you to be careful," he said, as he brought her to his own sitting-room. "This might easily have been a very nasty business. We must wash it with antiseptics, and then bandage it properly. We'll have the things brought in here, and the housekeeper will take you somewhere where you can put yourself to rights afterwards. Now," he said, at last, when the necessary operations were completed, "if you don't wear short sleeves nobody will see anything, so you need not go and frighten that excellent lady, your aunt. You can easily find an excuse for showing it to me in a day or two, and we'll see how it gets on. That wound—let me warn you—won't be well for a fortnight."

Miss Enid, when she appeared at luncheon, exhibited to the company no trace of her late experiences, excepting a slight paleness, and a certain sobriety of manner. Her low voice, and her faintly humorous smile, delighted Lord Cotswold, and he presently began to realize that this pretty girl schoolboy—for as such he had at first thought of her—was not so scatter-brained as she seemed.

"Did you," she said, abruptly, during the course of the meal to Dr. Thistlewood, "ever cut out any part of an animal's brain in order to change its character?"

"May I," said Dr. Thistlewood, "ask the reason of this sudden burst into science?"

"Oh," said Miss Enid, placidly, "it was all along of that terrier, which hadn't the spirit of a cat in it. Dr. Gonteau had a friend in Leipsig who operated on a dog like that. He took out the bit of its brain that produces fear, or secretes fear. Nothing would frighten it afterwards, and it became as fit as a fiddle."

"I'm afraid," said Lord Cotswold, "that I cannot encourage Dr. Gustav to cut up this particular terrier with a view to its moral improvement, since it belongs neither to him or me."

Miss Enid laughed. "Well," she said, "I'll make you a present of my own dog. Now's your chance. I was going to sell it, but if you like to use it, it's yours as a free gift. I used often to wonder what would happen if Dr. Gonteau's friend were to operate on a nun,

and cut out the part of her brain that secreted her belief in her rosary. Now you needn't look at me, Dr. Thistlewood, as if you thought I was a fool. I know quite well it would be impossible to make a nun reasonable in that way—or, perhaps, in any way. Beliefs in the brain must be mixed up so—just like claret and water—that you couldn't take away one without taking away goodness knows what besides. But still with some feelings—isn't this so?—it's different. They're mixed up with others, not like claret and water, but like oil and water, and you can take the oil away and leave the water behind."

"Dr. Gonteau," said Dr. Thistlewood, "ought to be proud of his pupil. Yes, you are quite right. Cases do differ as you say they do. A surgical operation will sometimes make an idiot sane. Let us ask your cousin, Mr. Hugo Arundel, what he thinks about it all."

Mr. Hugo smiled shyly; but a look from Lord Cotswold encouraged him.

"I once," he said, "made Mr. Barton very angry by telling him that one of his choir-boys, who was caught stealing some money, had probably received a blow in the neighbourhood of his left ear, because the virtue of honesty has its organ in that quarter; and I told him that anybody—even he himself—if he got hit there in the proper way, would at once become a thief, and would probably end in prison. He looked so angry. I think he would have liked to burn me, and then he tried to give a sort of superior laugh, and said, 'If you think that honesty can be destroyed by a chance blow, you'll next be telling me that a blow can destroy man's faith in God. I hardly think you would find many Christian martyrs to agree with you.'"

Mr. Hugo, with his customary simplicity, told this anecdote unconscious that it left Mr. Barton with the honour of the last word, and went on to explain that he proposed to educate his cousin by showing her that very night the beginnings of organic life, and a diagram reproduced from Dr. Thistlewood's, of the *microgamia socialis*, which would give her an idea of how human nature was put together, and how virtue, as Mr. Barton understood it, was a compound of many qualities, and might consequently be ruined by an adequate shock or a shake, just as easily as the flavour of a crusted bottle of Burgundy.

"I wish," said Lord Cotswold, when they had gone, "that Rawlin could have stayed, and listened to them. They approach life—these young people—like a child patting a tiger."

Sir Rawlin, who was to make an important speech that evening, and had gone back to his hotel in order to complete his arrangements for it, had indeed been more than half inclined to remain, and see

something more of this stranger who had taken Miss Vivian's place. Freed as he now was from his first overwhelming anxiety with regard to the possible consequences of his mad indiscretion during the thunderstorm, and forearmed, as he told himself, by experience against any possible repetition of it, he had felt his old tenderness for the beautiful girl revive, and it now resembled an affection which might be securely cherished for the dead. Such being the case, Miss Enid's likeness to her predecessor, combined with astonishing differences in point of aspect and character, had caused him to regard the rat-catcher with a friendly, but somewhat critical, interest. This did not, however, prove strong enough to detain him from his practical duties, and he was well content to defer any further acquaintance with her till his next visit to Cliff's End—an event which could not be distant. A few days ago he had, for many miserable hours, been doubtful as to how he could venture to show himself in that house again.

As for Mr. Barton, his glimpse of the new young lady who had looked him up and down so coolly when he encountered her in her aunt's drawing-room, had produced in him a train of emotions widely different from Sir Rawlin's. Lady Susannah who, as soon as she found herself alone with him, had conveyed to him Dr. Thistlewood's hint that in speaking to this sister it would be highly desirable to avoid any reference to the other, was met by him with the curt observation that, from what he had just seen of her, he doubted if he and Miss Wynn were likely to talk much about anything, and then he had plunged at once into the subject nearest to his heart.

"I suppose," he said, "you have not heard anything more——"

Lady Susannah laid a kindly hand on his sleeve. "About Nest?" she said. "No—of course not. My dear friend, how can you ask? We don't expect to do so till she's well enough to come back to us. That won't be for three weeks. Enid is to be here instead of her for at least three weeks or a month."

Mr. Barton took up the teacup which Lady Susannah had filled for him, stared at it and then put it down again, apparently unconscious of what his hands or his eyes were doing. Then, with the ghost of a laugh, as if he were addressing the carpet—

"Yes," he said, "I begin to see light now. Dr. Thistlewood no doubt would not wish me to talk to this young lady about her sister, for fear I should find out what it is he has done with her. He need not be afraid. I am going to be patient for a day or two, and then, when I want information, I will go to Dr. Thistlewood himself. I can promise him that Miss Enid Wynn will not suffer from my attentions.

"Don't speak like that about her," said Lady Susannah, gently. "Whatever her manners may be, I'm sure there is something good

in her; and if she has faults—even grave faults—as I think she very likely has, you, no less than I, should surely try to help, instead of turning away from her. When I feel that I know her a little better I will write to you. If her education has been neglected, think how you might remedy the neglect. She's Nest's sister. That should be enough to recommend her to you."

"I was wrong," said Mr. Barton. "I felt hastily, and I spoke hastily. If this young lady desires any help of mine, God knows that I am willingly at her service. Yes, write and tell me about Miss Wynn as soon as you have seen a little more of her, and if there is anything I can do for her I will do it, though I have an instinctive feeling that she will not desire my aid. I will only add one thing—a thing which I came here specially intending to say to you. You think me impatient, unreasonable—I could see that from your letters. Well, I am going to be patient. I shall do nothing for some days. Then, if meanwhile no further information has been tendered to me, I shall go to Dr. Thistlewood, tell him plainly what my relations with Miss Vivian are, and demand some account of what he has done with her, and of how she is getting on. If he refuses me this information, I start at once for Cimiez. I shall explain everything to her parents, and demand that there be no more mysteries."

CHAPTER IV

Such was the conversation which had, directly after Miss Wynn's arrival, taken place between Mr. Barton and Lady Susannah regarding her, nor had Lady Susannah very long to wait before she was in a position to write to him, according to her promise, and speak of Miss Wynn's character in more definite terms.

The girl, on finding that her absence at Lord Cotswold's castle had really alarmed her aunt, had exhibited a facile contrition which secured her an immediate pardon. Lady Susannah nevertheless was inclined to agree with Mr. Carlton, when he said to her with uplifted eyes, "My dear Susie, you've got a handful." Nor, as time went on, did she find this opinion modified. The very next morning Miss Enid disappeared again, and this time quite alone, Mr. Hugo being more or less indisposed in consequence of the dainties he had consumed at Lord Cotswold's table. To-day, indeed, she was punctually back for luncheon; but she had, as it turned out, been by herself to the golf-club, had explained who she was, had paid the required subscription, and had spent a couple of hours in beating and astonishing a professional, who was, she observed, "very nearly a gentleman."

From time to time, however, her high spirits would desert her, and leave her in a condition of subdued and almost sullen thoughtfulness. Lady Susannah, who noticed these fits of depression, viewed them with approval as signs of some latent moral sobriety, and, one of them happening to occur that same day after luncheon, she judged the occasion favourable to a little serious conversation. She found the girl in the drawing-room on a sofa with her eyes half closed, and inflicting an occasional kick on the cushions with a nailed boot. Luckily she had not caught a few meditative words which the young lady had just muttered half aloud, as an accompaniment to this performance. "Damn it!" she had said. "What's the odds? But I did make a * * * * fool of myself."

"My dear," began Lady Susannah, "I hope you're not going to feel dull with us," and then went on to question her with regard to her education, her reading, her tastes, and last of all her religion.

"I'm afraid," she continued, "that I'm not clever enough to know what these Histories of Religion are which your friends seem to have lent you, but I recognize none of the books which I should have thought it would have been right for you to read. I'm very glad, of course, that those nuns did not try to pervert you; but it seems to me that you've been left with no religious education at all. I should have been pleased myself if I could have seen you in the morning at prayers."

"My dear aunt," exclaimed the girl, "I'll come like a shot if you want me to."

"I'm afraid," said Lady Susannah, "I'm very, very old fashioned, and I don't quite understand such language; but I think that, if you were to come, it would be the right thing for you to do. But I must leave the matter to your own feelings. And now promise me one thing—that you won't think of your aunt as a tiresome, interfering old woman."

"Rather not," said the girl, and in order to emphasize her meaning she imprinted a brusque kiss on her aunt's somewhat meagre hair. For the moment this closed the subject, but at prayer-time the following morning Lady Susannah discovered that her words had not been fruitless. Miss Enid was present at the devotional rites of the family, and the demeanour of no worshipper could have been more modestly appropriate than hers.

After breakfast Lady Susannah drew her aside. "I know," she said, "that you and Hugo are going to meet Elvira O'Brian on the golf-ground, but come with me first for two short minutes into my boudoir. Dear Enid, I was touched and pleased when I saw you at prayers this morning, and I want to know if you would be willing to do one little thing more. You were good enough to listen to me yesterday when I questioned you about your religious training, and I do feel sure that there are many things which you ought to have been taught, and which you haven't been. One can't inflict such subjects on people against their will, but would you consent—it could, after all, not hurt you—to see Mr. Barton one day, and let him talk about them, if only for half an hour? He's a very clever, and a very learned man. Dr. Thistlewood went to All Saints on purpose to hear him preach. You'd find him quite different from those ignorant Roman Catholic sisters, or from those sly fat priests whom I used to see at Mentone. I've always thought it a mistake, although I know it's often done, for the parents of our Church to have their children taught in convents."

A slight pucker formed itself between Miss Wynn's eyebrows, and she slapped her rough short skirt with a pair of loose gauntlet gloves.

"Yes, you kind person," she said at last, "if you wish me to do

this I'll do it. Let him come and talk to me at any time he chooses —this week or next, morning, noon, or night—and I promise to listen. Only let me have fair warning."

"I promise you," said Lady Susannah, "that you shan't be taken unawares. I'll write to him and arrange a day."

The prospect of this projected interview, if it did not please Miss Enid, did very little to discompose her, and before she reached the golf-course she had dismissed the matter from her mind. There, at the door of the club-house, she and Mr. Hugo discovered Miss Elvira awaiting them. Miss Elvira, who had felt herself lately neglected for the new cousin, eyed Mr. Hugo at first with a sort of reproachful wistfulness. On Mr. Hugo's simplicity this unspoken language was lost. He felt that Miss Elvira had somehow become a bore, and with genial frankness he betrayed the fact. But time brought about its revenges. Miss Enid, whom he had hoped to patronize during the whole morning, expounding to her the secrets of trajectories and initial velocities, had in another moment apparently forgotten his existence. A smart professional had greeted her with a mixture of respect and jauntiness, the latter indicative of some previous intimacy, the former of admiration for her really unusual skill, and she was soon deep in conversation with him, tapping her boot with a rough walking-stick meanwhile. Then from somewhere or other appeared Miss Elvira's father, who, dressed in a suit like a chess-board, and looking for a worthy antagonist, introduced himself by a gleam of his eyes to her, and at once proposed a match.

Miss Enid turned to the professional. "Samuel," she said, "is he any good? Oh, he is, is he? Well, I don't mind a twosome. I suppose, Colonel O'Brian, we needn't wait for your daughter to tell us who each of us is? Hugo, you and the other girl must look after yourselves. Hi, there, Samuel, I'll take you on to-morrow again, and between now and then you might look me out another cleek."

Poor Mr. Hugo could get no comfort from science; but, a simple philosophy teaching him to make the best of the worst, he returned to his old love with a glow of forlorn eagerness, and realized that she had one charm at all events in which her rival was obviously deficient—that is to say, her play was distinctly worse than his own. The course of their game was, moreover, enlivened by an incident which enabled her to entertain him with her talents as a social critic. Leaning against a gate-post at one end of the enclosure, scanning the distant players with his large protruding eyes, and only made aware of their presence by a ball which approached his feet, they came upon the Colonel's distinguished foreign friend, Count Giordano.

"Hah, Miss O'Brian," he exclaimed, "I wish you a very good morning. I strolled up here from the town, thinking I might find

mon colonel. What is your dad doing? Lady-killing—eh? Or what?"

"I don't know about killing," said Miss Elvira, brusquely. "I think it's more likely he's being killed. You're safe to catch him at the club-house, as soon as his game's finished."

"Well," said the Count, "I won't balk your dad by looking at him, and I mustn't balk *you*—eh?—by making you stop to talk to me. That would be too dreadful. But quick, Miss Elvira, look there! You know everybody. Who is that charming person—the person in the pale-pink skirt? She reminds me of a certain fair lady I once used to know in Italy."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Miss Elvira, with the gravity of one who is struggling to suppress a giggle. "If I were you, I'd go and ask her; and if you don't want to be hit"—here the giggle asserted itself—"perhaps you won't mind standing out of the way of my small ball."

"Right you are, my lady," said the Count, with a glib smile. "In half an hour I shall be looking out for your governor at the club-house. I know the ways of golfers, and I'm not going to spoil sport."

The Count, sidling along the wall, was not many steps away from them, before Miss Elvira, who had been gagging herself with a crumpled pocket-handkerchief, discarded all restraint, and exploded in a spasm of laughter.

"Oh," she said, "he does kill me. He says that every woman he sees is like some one he knew in Italy. The pater thinks no end of him. But, oh, Mr. Hugo, shall I tell you a secret? The other night, when he dined with us, the Count wore an old overcoat, and Sarah—you know our parlour-maid—Sarah said that in the pocket of it she found—what do you think? A circular about some patent fuel, made out of Scotch peat. Sarah thinks he's what she calls a 'commercial'; and he told the pater that his mother was the daughter of a chieftain in the Hebrides. What fun it would be if the pater found him out! And then his impudence! Mr. Hugo, did you hear him? Fancy his talking about the pater as my dad, or my governor! Well, he's gone, thank goodness. So now let us give my ball a little initial velocity."

"Eh, O'Brian, you seem to have been in luck this morning," said one of the Colonel's intimates at the club-house, when, the Colonel's game being over, Mr. Hugo and Miss Enid had departed. "That was a pretty piece of goods who's been knocking you into a cocked hat."

"He always gets hold of the pretty ones, don't he?" said Count Giordano. "Who is the charmer this time?"

"Oh," replied Colonel O'Brian, perspiring with social triumph,

"she's a certain Miss Wynn—only been here a day or two—a niece of that old girl's, Lady Susannah Lipscombe. She's worth two of that relation of hers, whom the Count got very sweet on at the ball. No frills—and, by Jove, you can say what you like to her. She did let the damns fly, when her ball got lost in a bunker. I'd have walked her home, if I hadn't had my own young 'un here. Now, Miss Pink-cheeks, are you ready to step it?"

Mr. Hugo, when once more alone with his cousin, managed for five minutes to avenge her recent desertion of him by a sudden lordliness of demeanour, meeting her remarks on the excellence of the Southquay course with the assertion that no place was tolerable to which common people could get admission. But before long he thawed, and confided to her that at his own home he intended to have a private golf-course in the middle of an enormous park, and that the mansion should have attached to it a magnificent private laboratory. Everything, therefore, was sunshine by the time they reached Cliff's End, and they spent the afternoon together in examining some geological charts, in forming a new estimate of the antiquity of the human race, and in counting the dark spots which had appeared in the celebrated bottle, each perhaps destined to be the ancestor of some man or monkey in the future. Mr. Hugo's scientific vocabulary was so much more extensive than Miss Enid's, and he illuminated so much that was obvious by means of algebraic symbols, that he now had recovered his original moral ascendency, and he finally consolidated his position by producing an electrical apparatus from a box, and passing from the region of speculation to that of detailed experiment. This exciting transition was due to the cat Peter, who suggested to Mr. Hugo by miawing for a little attention the repetition of an old operation of his, throwing light upon animal psychology. A piece of liver, obtained in the back premises, was attached to a copper wire; and being hung over the edge of a table, the pendent delicacy was electrified. At this the cat made a series of enthusiastic leaps and every time his paws or his nose touched it a comet of sparks leapt out, which amazed, but did not daunt him. Miss Enid watched this performance as if she were a child of ten, till repetition having made it insipid, she longed for something more exciting.

"You've got a Leyden jar," she said. "Charge it for all it's worth, and we'll give Peter a shock. Now, Mr. Hugo, you try it yourself. Touch the knob. You baby!—I don't believe you dare!"

Mr. Hugo, thus put on his mettle, unwillingly obeyed her orders, and not all his familiarity with occult forces of nature could prevent his starting from his chair and ejaculating a cry of consternation, whilst Miss Enid filled the room with a peal of delighted laughter.

"Now," she exclaimed, "let's try that on Peter."

Mr. Hugo, though ferocious in his materialism, had a very tender heart.

"No," he said, "no; that would make him quite wild, and hurt him."

But Miss Enid's will was the stronger, and with awed disapproval, but also with considerable interest, he watched her making her preparations.

"How will you manage to give it him?" he ventured to say at last.

For answer, Miss Enid put the cat on the table, gave it a bit of liver, and stroking it till it began to purr, she rested an edge of the jar on one of his front paws. The train was laid. An inch or two from Peter's face was a glimmering brass ball, which presently caught his attention, and he mildly approached his nose to it, as though he desired to smell it. In another second the ball and the nose touched. A globule of blinding brightness leapt into portentous existence, Peter sprang into the air as though he had been blown up by gunpowder, and then rushed into a corner, where he cowered, the very image of terror.

"Poor Peter!" exclaimed Mr. Hugo, overwhelmed with remorse.

"Hugo," exclaimed Miss Enid, "I shall positively die of laughing!"

Then the door burst open, and Miss Arundel entered.

"What *have* you two been doing?" she said, as though scenting wickedness in the air. "You have not been giving Peter a shock, have you? That's your doing, Enid. How could you?" Miss Arundel's eyes blazed, and anger, a rare emotion with her, made a furnace of her kindly cheeks. Her outburst, indeed, was so violent that it ended by saving the situation. "I'm sorry," she said, relenting, "if I spoke to you too crossly. But that really was very thoughtless of you. Please don't do it again."

"Nina," said Miss Enid with a half smile, "you're a dear; and I wouldn't hurt you, and I wouldn't hurt Peter for the world!"

So that incident ended; but it opened Miss Arundel's eyes to certain characteristics of her cousin which had, without her being aware of it, impressed themselves on her mind already. Miss Enid's instinct was to be on good, and even affectionate terms with all the friends, and even all the acquaintances surrounding her; but her consciousness of them was, for practical purposes, confined to those on whom, from hour to hour, the interest of her life depended. Thus for Lady Susannah she had doubtless a really grateful attachment; and yet on the morning of the rat-catching she had never given a thought to the natural anxiety which her absence would inflict on this kindly friend. Mr. Hugo she treated in very much the same way. When she wanted him he was her confidential and

also her admired brother. At other times he was a forgotten toy. She had no desire apparently to give pain to any one; but she seemed unaware that any one could be pained by what gave pleasure to herself. For the rest, her amiability—so Miss Arundel thought—was almost too indiscriminate. It is true that at lunch that day, after her game with Colonel O'Brian, she observed that the Colonel had some highly objectionable friend with him, whose back —and his back was all she saw of his person—"gave her the cold creeps." But against this example of discrimination, Miss Arundel was obliged to set Miss Wynn's avowed predilection for the company of Sam, the professional, which, as she observed to her aunt, was certainly "rather odd." Lady Susannah agreed that "odd" was the right epithet for it—the word "odd," with such ladies as these, being a veiled and timorous synonym for the terrible word "indecent."

This comparing of notes between them took place that same afternoon, and Lady Susannah, as a result of it, wrote forthwith her promised letter to Mr. Barton. Miss Wynn, she said to him, was at heart thoroughly amiable. She was, indeed, even generous. She was, however, wholly wanting in moral training and discipline, never having had, so far as Lady Susannah could make out, any religious instruction from a member of her own Church.

"If you take her the right way," she added, "I'm sure she will be glad to listen to you. Poor child! she told me so herself. So, if you would name a time at which you could come and see her, I will take care that she is ready for you."

To this communication Mr. Barton's reply was prompt. "I will, indeed, gladly come," he wrote, "and do the best I can. I am touched by what you tell me of the underlying goodness of your young kinswoman's disposition. But my visit to her, unless we postpone it longer than I think you wish, will have to take place to-morrow or the day after. I must tell you why. I have seen Dr. Thistlewood. I explained the situation to him. He listened to me —I must in justice say this of him—with the same quickness, and, indeed, the same sympathy of comprehension which he would have shown had I been some nameless patient. But when I asked for news, he remained as silent as the grave. On Friday or Saturday, therefore, I am going myself to Cimiez. I can bear suspense no longer. Meanwhile, to-morrow or next day I will call, preferably in the afternoon, at any hour you choose."

CHAPTER V

THE sense of having been detected in some more or less humiliating delinquency affects different natures differently. Miss Wynn's sense of what had happened to her in connection with poor Peter, if it did not produce repentance, produced a most engaging amendment. Lady Susannah noticed at dinner that her whole demeanour was softened; nor the following day did this change show any signs of exhausting itself. She announced, indeed, at breakfast, with a slight wink at Mr. Hugo, designed as a pleasant reminder to him of his admitted inefficiency on the golf-course, that she intended to play before luncheon her projected game with the professional. But she no longer spoke of him, with her former familiarity, as Sam. To-day he was "that brown-eyed man there, who's the best player by a long chalk I ever came across in my life." And even from this dissipation it did not take much to divert her.

"Hi, Oswald!" she said, happening to encounter him in the garden as she was setting out on her expedition, "you can come along with me if you've nothing better to do. Look here! I'm going to confide in you, and ask you to do me a favour. I tore my arm the other day when Hugo and I were ratting. Dr. Thistlewood did it up, and I want him to look at it again, as the plaster is getting loose. I shall have my game first, else he might order me not to; and you, my dear boy, if you'll be mum, and if you don't mind making yourself useful, may tramp with me as far as the golf-course, and then—I'll tell you what. You may go and ring at the castle, and tell Dr. T. I'm coming. Thank you. I knew you would. You haven't got that pair of obliging dark eyes for nothing. I hope Nina's forgiven me for showing the cat what a shock is. I did get a wigging, didn't I? Well, off we go, for we haven't much time to lose."

They had, however, not gone far when two persons caught their attention, who, with faces set towards the golf-course, were clambering over a distant stile.

"Look!" exclaimed Oswald. "One of those is Colonel O'Brian."

Miss Enid looked for a moment, and then she turned sharply round.

"No," she said, "no. I won't play, after all. My arm really hurts, and I can't stand that man with his odious, staring friends. You go on and just tell the professional—the freckled one, Samuel Walker—that I'm dead, or have small-pox, or have gone to bed, or to America—anyhow, that I can't come. And don't bother about Dr. T. I'll write to him, and go to-morrow."

"You were quite wise, Enid," said Oswald, when he rejoined her on his return home, "in keeping clear of this golf-course. I never saw such a crew as there was this morning at the club-house. I gave your message to Walker, and, while I was doing so, the Colonel came up and stood listening, and he winked at me, and said, 'How is she?' I pretended not to know what he meant; but the creature wouldn't take a snub. 'My own young 'un,' he said, 'thinks that the fair cousin is an heiress.' And then, if you please, while this monster was trying to talk to me, I looked round and saw that some of his friends were listening—a foreign animal amongst them, smiling a damned inquisitive smile—as if anything to do with you could have any possible connection with an underbred brute like him. I merely said, 'I'm afraid, Colonel O'Brian, that your information as to the affairs of my relations is considerably more extensive than my own.'"

"Well done," said Miss Enid. "I'm glad that you shut them up. I'm hanged if I ever go and show myself on that beastly golf-course again."

"My dear," said Lady Susannah, to whom, in more conventional language, she was before long expressing the same resolve, "I've just had a letter from Mr. Barton, and"—she here dropped her voice, for the party were going in to luncheon—"I hope the time will suit."

The girl gave a nod of placid comprehension and acquiescence, and Lady Susannah was again inclined to think that she had represented her to Mr. Barton as more unregenerate than she was. The Old Adam, indeed, remained in complete abeyance till the following day, when it reappeared under circumstances, the influence of which was not confined to herself. Lady Susannah, having started after luncheon on a long round of calls and tea-parties, the occasional payment of which was a Christian obligation of her station, her family, Mr. Carlton included, were left to the enjoyment of a subtle sense of freedom which often springs from the absence of those from whom our welfare flows, and tea was to be a familiar feast in the undisturbed seclusion of the schoolroom. Even before the old butler had begun to bring in the viands, Oswald had celebrated the occasion by starting a waltz on the gramophone; and Mr. Carlton,

who had once been a renowned dancer, felt that his seventy years had reduced themselves to less than thirty. The result was that, by the time he had eaten his last tea-cake, he desired that the instrument might give them a new performance, and jumping up from his chair, and seeking an open space, he went through a *pas seul* in a way so vivacious and skilful that even the staid Miss Arundel was dissolved in applausive laughter. He danced, indeed, like a youth in the fancy costume of age; and he did not stop till, his wig giving certain signs of insecurity, he sank into a chair with a ladylike gasp of exhaustion, and patted his precarious tresses with both of his ringed hands.

"I haven't done that," he panted, "since I did it for my poor dear Princess. Shall I show you how she thanked me?" And he incontinently treated them to a reproduction of a series of royal mannerisms.

A rich flush mounted to the cheeks of Miss Enid. "You," she said, "all of you, just wait where you are. I won't be away for a moment." And, so speaking, she disappeared.

Five minutes passed, and she was once again in the schoolroom. If Mr. Carlton had gasped, as a consequence of his own activity, he gasped now to very much greater purpose. Miss Arundel, Oswald, and Mr. Hugo, did not gasp, but they stared. Their new cousin was no longer a girl. She was a charming little Albanian stripling. A dagger and a pistol were in her belt; a kilt just touched her knees; and just to the customary height rose a pair of scarlet stockings.

At first Miss Arundel hardly knew where to look; but, fighting with the impulse to be scandalized, she finally achieved a smile. Miss Enid, however, left little time for any such preliminary criticism.

"Now, Oswald," she said, "buck up and move the table. I'll show you a dance which I learned from Roy Fraser, who took the cake three times at the games at Oban. All mountaineers dance much in the same way."

Mr. Carlton watched with enthusiasm the animation of the dancer's body, the naïve and gallant effrontery of her rhythmical hands and feet, and her growing abandonment to an adventure which, inspired with the soul of mischief, awoke even in Miss Arundel no consciousness of indecorum. To Oswald and Mr. Hugo it was the mischief of the matter that constituted its chief charm; but Mr. Carlton, touched by mundane misgivings, would now and then raise his eyes to the ceiling and murmur, "Well, it's lucky that poor dear Aunt Susannah's out!" The proceedings, however, received a far more efficacious check than any which Mr. Carlton would have been competent, or indeed even wished, to impose on them. Just as they were reaching their climax, the door was abruptly opened by

old Berry, the butler. For a moment he looked round him, not seeing Miss Wynn anywhere; but at last, recognizing her in the strange apparition before him, he managed to articulate—

"Mr. Barton, miss, has called to see you. Would you wish him to be shown in here?"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Miss Wynn, growing sober and self-possessed in an instant. "Good heavens—I'd quite forgot! No—take him to my sitting-room. Offer him some tea, and tell him I'll be with him directly."

Oswald and Mr. Hugo looked at one another, very much more delighted with this end to the dance than they had been with the dance itself. Miss Wynn already was more than sober; she was reflective; yet she could not refrain, as she turned to leave the room, from giving Mr. Hugo one of her slight fraternal winks.

"I must," she whispered, "before I see him, get a fresh piece of sticking-plaster. That scratch on my arm is beginning to hurt again."

Mr. Barton, meanwhile, had been taken to the little room upstairs, which, during Miss Vivian's occupation of it, he had visited only once, but of which he still retained a recollection vivid in its solemn tenderness. His heart, when he entered, ached with a desolating sense of difference. The same chairs and tables were standing in the same places, but most of the books were gone and the little feminine ornaments. On the largest of the tables lay a novel, called "Market Harborough," a treatise called "Whip and Saddle," and a pocket-book full of fish-hooks. The *prie-dieu* in the corner was laden with numbers of the *Field* newspaper, and by it was a pair of wading-boots, which Miss Enid had thus far found no occasion to use. At last he saw, as a solitary relic of the absent, the violet back of the carefully bound Confirmation Manual, which he had given to the elect disciple, lying under a magazine called *Sport*. He saw and suffered; but he had within the last few days become once more his own master, calmly prepared to use, in the service of any soul, whatever powers might be his of intellect, of knowledge, or persuasive spiritual sympathy. Indeed, his consciousness of these powers, whether possessed by him as a man or as a priest, was on the present occasion more lofty and more distinct than usual, when he thought of the dense ignorance which he had been called on to fathom and enlighten.

Presently, from the room within, his new catechumen burst on him. She was still in her Albanian outfit, and was holding, pressed against her skin, a broad strip of sable sticking-plaster, which, from one of her wrists, ran some way up her arm.

From Mr. Barton's face an austere though not ungentle gravity disappeared for a moment, but only to give place to amazement.

"I'm afraid," she said very graciously, "that I can't offer you

my hand. I've scratched, or rather cut, my arm, and the plaster has not quite stuck yet."

Mr. Barton, whose amazement was untinged by anything like offended primness—for the vulgar trivialities of mere prudery were unknown to him—bowed, looked her up and down, and said, with a half-smile—

"Positively, I did not know you."

"You find me," she said placidly, "in a rather unconventional get-up. I was showing my cousins a Highland dance downstairs; and then this beastly old scratch began hurting, and I had to see to it; and I haven't stopped to change, because I didn't want to keep you waiting. But I know what I'll do; it won't take me a second.

She retired to her bedroom, and directly afterwards reappeared, carrying on her arm a dressing-gown of thin dark cloth, on the gilt buttons of which was the monogram of a well-known hunt.

"If you," she said, "would kindly give me a pull-on with this, you'll find that I look then rather less of a guy."

Mr. Barton performed this office with a courteous but dry adroitness, as though, his first surprise being over, the incident were beneath his notice. If any surprise was left, it had migrated to the features of the girl, and was not, perhaps, quite unmixed with some furtive traces of disappointment. Anyhow, her person assumed, when enveloped in this new garment, an aspect of mature and almost severe sobriety.

"Now," she said, "sit down—won't you? My aunt, who is goodness itself, was very anxious that I should see you; and really, Mr. Barton, it's equally good of you both to trouble your heads about an unprofitable creature like me. I shan't, I'm afraid, stand very high in your estimation; but, still, I may tell you honestly, it will interest me much to listen to you. I've seen so little of this sort of thing before."

CHAPTER VI

The perfect propriety of Miss Enid Wynn's language, and the suave seriousness of her manner, surprised Mr. Barton even more than the strangeness of her late appearance, and in some subtle way—he could not tell what—disturbed him more.

"Well," he began quietly, "I'm not here to talk gossip, so I'd better plunge at once into what I have come to say. I presume that, nominally at least, you belong to the English Church?"

"Well, you see," replied the girl, "I've been brought up and lived abroad; and the English Church there isn't quite what it is here. When I was a youngster, I went to school, you see, at a convent, *faute de mieux*."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Barton; "that happens very often; but your aunt tells me that the Sisters didn't make a Romanist of you. I may also presume," he went on, with a faint smile, "that you're not a Wesleyan, or a Baptist, or a Plymouth Sister. So I think I may take it that your Church is the presumable Church of your father, though you have, as I take it also, not been very well instructed. Anyhow, there are some things in which all Christians agree, which even children know, if they are not absolute heathens, and about which even the most heedless children must at times think seriously. For example, no one knows better than a child what conscience is. It hears in it that voice of God which Adam heard in Eden, troubling it when it does wrong. Children know that God made both the world and them, the dust of their bodies, and the souls which for a few days or years are cloaked in it; and they know that when this dust is puffed aside, as it will be, they will go, for good or evil, naked into God's presence; and though they partly desire His presence—for they love their Divine Father—they partly fear it, for they know how often they have offended Him. But for Christian children this terrible fear has its antidote. They are taught how God, out of His infinite love for each of them, sent His Son to take all their sins upon Himself, and to wipe out all their stains, and to bring them to His arms pardoned. You are—you must be—as well aware as I am, that Christians of all denominations agree as to these simple points;

and I presume they are as familiar to yourself as, in all Christian countries, they are to the humblest ploughboy."

The girl who had, with slightly contracted brows, been drawing geometrical patterns on the back of "Whip and Saddle," looked up when he paused and said, nodding assent—

"That's correct enough. In what are called Christian countries most children—I myself was one of them—are still taught as much as that."

Mr. Barton felt that at last he had found a starting-point. The girl, if not very responsive, was at all events serious and intelligent. He accordingly went on to explain to her in a matter-of-fact way that the great truths of religion had one sort of resemblance to the things and laws of nature. A child could understand that fire would burn its finger, or that a clock on the wall would tumble down if it were not for the nail that held it. These facts it could grasp as well as the most profound philosopher. But these isolated facts were parts of a great system—the system of natural law; and as children grew up, and had to grapple with the world themselves, it was necessary for them to learn how these single facts were connected. With regard to the truths of religion the case was just the same. These, as we grew up, had to be grasped by us as parts of a system also; and of this spiritual system the Church was at once the exponent and a part. She carried our knowledge back to the beginning of God's dealings with man, and to the origin of all our faults and weaknesses; and gave to each of us, through her sacraments and otherwise, renewed strength to overcome them.

"I may add," said Mr. Barton, "that the Church, for each one of her children, is a conscience beyond a conscience. The conscience of the individual may sleep, but the conscience of the Church never sleeps. It is a constant reminder to all of us of the four last things—things more certain for all of us than the dawn of to-morrow morning, or the publication of to-morrow's newspapers —Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell."

"I was," said the girl quietly, after a certain interval of silence, "looking the other day into a little book that I found here—a little book about Confirmation."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Barton, unable to suppress a sigh. "I am glad to hear you say so."

"Of course," she proceeded, "you must know what that book says, for you've given it, I see, to somebody with some very illegible initials, who was, I suppose, once instructed by you; and the sort of things which that little book says—they seem the sort of things which I remember to have been told myself."

"Ah," said Mr. Barton, "so you have had some instruction after all. Yes, you are right. There is nothing in that book which you

would not be taught by any Catholic instructor, no matter of what communion."

"Well," said the girl, "since you've been good enough to come here and talk to me, you won't mind my asking you one or two straight questions. Where's the little book got to? It's there. Do you mind tossing it to me? Well, Mr. Barton, in the first chapter I find this. Let me read it out. 'How is it that we come to have a bad nature? Because Adam sinned, and lost his likeness to his Creator, and, having lost it, could not transmit it to his children. Thus, even a little baby, though it may not have done anything wrong, is born with a wicked nature. It is unable to do anything good.'"

"Certainly," said Mr. Barton. "I remember the passage well."

"And then," she went on, "comes a long bit about the Devil; and certain bad dispositions in us, such as sloth, anger, and gluttony, are specially mentioned as the Devil's characteristic work."

"I'm glad to see," said Mr. Barton, "that you've been reading the book so carefully. You know more than I thought you did. What are the difficulties about which you desire to ask me?"

"Well," said the girl, looking up at the ceiling, and picking her words carefully, "it's this way. You see in Italy and France, I suppose, a good half of the lower classes, and most of the women amongst the upper classes, are under the thumb of the priests, who flatter them up or frighten them; and they take all this about Adam and the Devil literally, but educated men don't. Now I want you, if you don't mind, just to tell me how it is in England."

"How what is in England?" asked Mr. Barton. "I don't quite follow your train of thought. Take your time. See if you can't put it clearly."

"Well," said the girl, with a curious smile, "I'll try. Except for two others—and they didn't count for much—you're the first English clergyman I ever met in my life. As for the rest. I only know what I've heard, but I know that some of them are in some ways exactly like the priests abroad. If they could they'd prevent divorce; and if any man married a divorced woman, they would, if they could, ruin the lives of both of them, and treat them as if they were thieves or murderers. I know so much from the case of two of my best friends. But I won't let fly about that, or I might say something I should be sorry for; and besides, it's not that which I have in my mind now. Look here—what I want to ask you is this. You are the first Englishman I ever heard talk about religion, and you're clever and learned, so my aunt says, and have written very learned books. Well, do you, as an educated English clergyman—it sounds awful cheek for me to be asking you this—mean, when you give

people books like this little Confirmation Manual, that things like Adam and the Devil are to be taken as downright facts?"

"Your question," said Mr. Barton, "is a legitimate one. I will pass by certain remarks with which you mixed it up, and for the moment we will keep to that. I am glad to think I can help you by solving your very natural difficulties. Everything depends on what we mean by downright facts. The sceptic of to-day, knowing nothing of history, thinks that such difficulties are new—that he, with his own cleverness, has been the first person to discover them, and that they are overwhelming. It will, perhaps, surprise you to hear that the early Church saw them just as clearly as he does—saw them, and saw through them. As St. Augustine has clearly shown, we are not bound to believe, and the Church does not teach us, that Adam's sin was the actual eating of an apple; or that the personal Spirit of Evil took the actual form of a snake. The Church teaches us only that Adam, the common father of us all, injured his own nature, no matter how or where, by some act of a deliberately perverted will; that our natures have been corrupted through his; and that the personal Spirit of Evil was mysteriously accessory to his fall. So much we are bound to accept as facts, unless we are to accuse God Himself of lying to us through His own Word. We believe these essential facts, but they have been told to us through symbols or allegories. What remains of our difficulties, when we look at the matter thus? Just as our own bodies prove both to you and me the existence at some time of the bodies of our immediate parents, so the discord in our own spiritual natures show that at some time or other our first parent sinned. God's revelation is confirmed by our natural common-sense. And, as for the Devil, we are aware of him every day, whenever temptations to sloth, anger, intemperance, or what you will, beset us. Why, then, should we doubt his activity in the remote past? Are you satisfied now? Or would you like to ask me something more?"

The girl leaned back in her chair, and again looked up at the ceiling, as though she thought and spoke more readily when her eyes did not meet those of her questioner.

"And so," she said at last, "that's how the land lies, is it? I mean, that's how you, and the Church in this country, look at things? Well, Mr. Barton, it's very good of you to have come, and have taken the trouble to put it all so clearly. Thank you ever so much. I understand quite enough. Would you have a cup of tea? I should only be making a mess of it, if I said anything more."

Mr. Barton looked puzzled. "You understand quite enough!" he exclaimed with a slight smile. "Why, my dear child, thus far we've only touched on the rudiments—the things every child starts

with. You're keeping something back. Let me hear it. I shan't be able to help you unless you will tell me everything."

"Do you really mean that?" asked the girl.

"Can you," said Mr. Barton, dryly, "suppose anything else? If I were your regular spiritual director—which I am not, at least not yet—I should not only ask, I should order you, to lay bare every perplexity which lurks in the recesses of your mind."

"Well," said the girl, "if what I say doesn't please you, you mustn't blame me—that's all. Since you order me, I'll obey orders. I'd better begin by telling you just how I've been educated. I haven't had much schooling—not since I left the convent, but I've known one or two of the cleverest men in France, and I knew some clever men in Egypt, too, and they liked teaching and showing things to a kid; so I've picked up a good few of the facts that are generally known. Well, Mr. Barton, if you will have the exact truth, here goes. When you talk to me about Adam as man who was originally perfect, and who then suddenly did something—it doesn't much matter what—which put him out of order himself, and the whole human race along with him, and about a Devil—whether he was a snake or no—who managed to make him do it; and when you talk about the book of Genesis being the grounds on which we believe this, because Genesis, even if only an allegory, is God's own Word put by Him into the mouth of Moses—when you talk in this way, you might, so far as I am concerned, just as well be talking about old Deucalion's stones, or the dragon's teeth of what's-his-name, or be telling me that the earth is held up by an elephant, and the elephant held up by a tortoise. Why, in Egypt—Mr. Barton, please don't interrupt me—I've seen buildings that were ten thousand years old before the Church makes out that Adam was born or thought of. And when you talk about the first man having been perfect, and then having committed a sin—I have been taught that the first man—Dr. Gonteau has a model of his bones which were found in Java—that the first man was a creature you could hardly have distinguished from a monkey. And then, Mr. Barton, about anger, and all that—what I've been taught is this, that men are angry, not because of the Devil, but because what we call anger is a kind of protective instinct, without which no species could have survived in the struggle for existence. And as for the origin of sloth—sloth comes from a bad liver, or else a relaxing climate. And then, look at hounds. One hound's a bad feeder, another's what you call a glutton. Do you think the Devil keeps a staff at the kennels? That's how I've been taught to look at things. The murder's out at last, and I'm sure you think I'm not fit to stay in the room with you any longer."

Mr. Barton, however, showed no inclination to go. On the

contrary, he seemed to be bracing himself for a far from hopeless struggle.

"I suppose," he said with an icy but not an unfriendly sarcasm, "that your preceptors, who seem to have been writers for the cheap rationalist press, forget to notice that men differ from hounds in the trifling particular that they are possessed of immortal souls."

"Yes," she said, "that's just it. If you really believe in an immortal soul at all, I suppose you can believe anything."

Mr. Barton's answer somewhat surprised his hearer. "Certainly," he said, with an assenting inclination of the head; "of course you can. Do but reflect on the miracle of your own soul's existence; and you'll soon realize, if you honestly desire the truth, that nothing which the Church teaches is, in itself, incredible. I don't despair of your finding the Light yet. But I must confess—you poor unfortunate child—that you're not at present very fit to become a candidate for Confirmation, which, I think, is what your aunt would wish you to be."

"Oh," said the girl, "Confirmation! She may make herself easy about that. Bless you, I've been confirmed already. I'm rather confused about time, but ever so many years ago."

"You astonish me," exclaimed Mr. Barton. "And have you ever been to Holy Communion?"

"I very nearly didn't," she replied, "just to spite that old image of a priest, who made me sick with his twaddle about the Month of Mary. But the Sisters seemed to wish it; and they weren't bad creatures, so I went. I shouldn't do so now. It would make me feel too much of a fraud. Besides, why should I? There'd be no object in it."

The last words, said with perfect simplicity, made Mr. Barton for the moment completely lose his bearings. He rose as though he would leave the room, but he did not. He stood looking down at her. Nothing of him stirred but his lips, which twitched with anger. Then with an effort, which invested him with a curious dignity, he forced himself into another mood.

"And so," he began, in words whose calm had a painful quiver in it, "you see no object in approaching—in receiving—what words shall I use?—the body of Him who died for you? Unhappy, most unhappy girl—you are without a Saviour—I might almost say without a God—I might almost say without a soul—so you are determined to think, till the day comes when you will be called on to face all. You will then know that you have a soul, which the hound has not—a soul eternal, indestructible, responsible for every act and thought—a soul for which Christ suffered, but for which—for which—I will pray, for at present I can do nothing else, that He may not have suffered in vain. And for what have you blinded your eyes to all

that is most real in existence—to the only things that will exist when this world of lifeless matter shall have passed away like a shadow? You have blinded your eyes, you have abandoned reverent knowledge, for the sake of an ignorance which may flatter your foolish pride, and call itself by the names of science and scientific history, but which really is as ridiculous for the educated human intellect as the fetich-philosophy of the most abject savages—even though two of the cleverest men in France may profess it. Before I go, let me ask you—have you nothing more to say to me?"

"Yes," said the girl. "I should like to ask you one more question. Would you, like the priests abroad, if priests had everything in their power, prevent divorce? or, if divorced persons married, would you treat them as outcasts, and set all the world against them?"

"I have no objection," said Mr. Barton, "to answering you. The Church accords no treatment to divorced persons who marry; for in the eyes of the Church no such persons exist. Marriage being indissoluble, real divorce is impossible, and if persons nominally divorced contract a nominal marriage, they are no better than those shameless ones whose very name I shrink from pronouncing to you."

"Thank you," said the girl, with a sudden gleam in her eyes. "You needn't be squeamish. Amongst the shameless ones are my own parents. Yes—it's just as I thought. Clericalism in England is the same as clericalism in France. Why don't you shut your eyes so as not to see a child of shame? Yes—shut them—do; for I've still something more to say. I believe people are married who suit each other, and as long as they suit each other; and the law imposes conditions on them for the sake of social convenience only—because of children and family property; and priests pretend otherwise, and talk about mysteries and sacraments, only because they want always to be getting the whip-hand of everybody, and they want to frighten everybody; and they dress up a lot of bogies called sins, or the four last things, hoping that people to-day will still take these scarecrows seriously. That was all very well for them once, but now they're being found out. You talk about the four last things. People know now that for themselves there's only one last thing—that's death; and that for the universe there's no last at all. You tell me I shall live again, and then find out my mistake; and as soon as I hear you say this, you expect me to shake in my shoes. You might just as well tell a diseased potato that it would live again, and then find out that its disease was its own fault, and be roasted for ever in consequence before some everlasting stove. Nature makes us what we are, just as it makes potatoes; and when you ask me to believe that a bishop by feeling my head with his fingers, or

shaking his silly ring at me, can make me any better or any worse than I am, or that a priest has anything to do with the rights or the wrongs of marriage, you might as well ask me to do what they did in the French Revolution—stick up what you would call some shameless one, and worship her as the goddess of reason. I can tell you this—you must remember that I speak by your order—if you want me to worship any individual whatever, I'd far sooner worship Dr. Gonteau or Dr. Thistlewood than the founder——"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Barton. "I forbid you to say a word farther." And there was something in his manner by which the girl was cowed. "I will not," he continued, "ask you to consult your conscience, for you say you have none. I will only remind you that a lady, whatever her religious views, is usually sorry if she has insulted and given acute pain to an invited and a friendly guest. I would fain be your friend still, though no good purpose would be served by my remaining with you longer now; and if for some time to come I make no attempt to see you again, my reason is not that I resent your demeanour to myself personally, but that to-morrow I am leaving England for a somewhat uncertain period. You will not wish to shake hands with me, and I fear that at this moment I could not bring myself to touch yours."

"Mr. Barton, look here," cried the girl, as the priest was disappearing through the doorway, "if I hit you below the belt, I'm sorry; but you should not have put my back up, and pitched into my parents. It's not you I hate; it's the system you represent. Damn him! he's gone. These idiots always put you in the wrong if they can, and then run away like cowards, thinking they've bowled you out. Anyway he won't be here to get me into a row, and when he comes back I'll let him have it again."

Mr. Barton escaped from the house, sick with a sense of horror, as a man might be who, for the first time, has seen a human being killed, or befouled by some loathsome pestilence. The general fact that a moral and intellectual rabble, abetted by men like Dr. Thistlewood and the excavators of bones at Southquay, were fomenting all over the world a rebellion against God and Christ, was for him so familiar that it filled him with a chronic and contemptuous animosity; but except in the persons of such men as Dr. Thistlewood, who were chance and distant acquaintances, and who veiled their absurdities by discretion, he had never had a bodily encounter with the accursed thing before; and now its fangs had been darted at him from the lips of a young girl. The memory of her blasphemies seemed to lick him like tongues of flame. Sometimes his heart, as he thought of her, grew hard as flint; sometimes it was almost broken; and then in the middle of his perturbations one thing came suddenly back to him—the words which had passed between him and her as

to marriage. If she were a child of shame, what was his own loved one? And was not he personally preparing to throw himself on the good-will of those parents whom he had allowed himself so justly, yet perhaps unadvisedly, to denounce? Such reflections saddened, but they did not daunt him. They exhausted themselves in a prayer, "Lord, help me to rescue her from their unhappy hands." By the earliest train next morning he was to start on his pilgrimage to Nice.

CHAPTER VII

THAT evening Miss Wynn was curiously silent. To Lady Susannah this seemed an excellent symptom, and she said to her on the landing, as they were both on their way to their bedrooms—

"I hope, my dear, that you got on well with Mr. Barton."

"Yes," said the girl, demurely. "I told him everything—perhaps even more than I had meant to do."

Lady Susannah took her by the hand and kissed her. "Good night, dear Enid," she said. "I am very, very glad. Sleep well, my dear."

This last injunction, however, Miss Enid did not obey. The image of Mr. Barton haunted her and drove rest from her pillow. Had he lost his temper and stormed at her, her feelings would have been less acute. It was his self-control that exasperated her, his tone of unperturbed superiority, his daring to speak about orders which conceivably it might be his duty to impose on her. "This solemn jackanapes," she said to herself, "talking the twaddle of his grandmother, and presuming to tell his dear child how the world was made, when there isn't a *gamin* in a State school who doesn't know ten times more about the origin of the world than he! This thing of cassocks and petticoats shaking his Adams and his sacraments at me, as if they were a baby's rattle—he to pronounce his judgments on my father, my mother, and myself! He to pronounce an opinion on what I ought to do, or ought not to do! I'll give him," she thought, "by the time he gets back, something or other to pronounce upon! I'll make him sit up! He shall see if he can direct *me!*"

Here was a resolve at last, which had the effect of soothing her, and, shorn of certain exaggerations, it was fresh in her mind next morning. Directly after breakfast, with a new light in her eyes, she drew Mr. Hugo into a corner, and held him in a whispered conversation, of which Oswald was somewhat jealous till he happened to catch a few words of it, and gathered that it had reference to some species of mechanical invention. Whatever the secret was, Mr. Hugo was visibly delighted with it, and Oswald heard him say—

"Yes, of course, you could hire one; but if I were to have one of my own, I should not expect to get it for less than fifteen hundred pounds."

"Well," said Miss Enid, "you must do the best you can for me. I shan't go out till it comes. I'm sick of that rotten golf-course and the sort of people you meet there. I don't mean Sam. I mean the men who call themselves gentlemen, like that creature with a cringing back—I've seen another back like it—who wanted, so Oswald tells me, to know if I was an heiress. Sam's worth the whole boiling of them."

The following day at luncheon Mr. Hugo's face was so troubled by futile efforts to suppress an important smile as to bring to Oswald the certainty that something or other had been accomplished; and the mystery of the plot was destined very soon to reveal itself. The meal was drawing to its close, when the quiet of the old-fashioned room was broken by certain sounds which Lady Susannah took for the trumpetings of a brass band at the door. She was expressing this view, when Miss Enid, who was listening with grave intentness, exclaimed, jumping up from her seat—

"Mr. Hugo, it's come! it's come! What fun, Aunt Susannah! We must go to the door to look at it!"

"It?" repeated her aunt. "What do you mean by 'it'?"

"Oh," said Miss Enid, rapidly, "the motor I've hired for a fortnight. Didn't you hear it tootling? I can almost smell the petrol. I'll take you to Plymouth and back in it before you can say 'knife.'"

Lady Susannah felt much like the proverbial hen when she sees the duckling hatched by her first take to the water. She was soon, however, at the front door, together with the rest of the party; and there, with a man attached to it, pale of face and habited in black leather, stood a long and powerful car, which would accommodate some five passengers.

"Does she run all right?" said Miss Enid, with a nod of free-masonry to the man.

"Sweet as can be," he replied, with the usual taciturnity of his class.

"Now," said Miss Enid, "who's game for an outing? Don't all speak at once. You, Aunt Susannah? You, Cousin George? I won't have you, Oswald. You look much too superior. Well, settle it among yourselves; and I'll take her down the drive and back again, just to see how she climbs the hill."

"My dear!" exclaimed Lady Susannah, horror-stricken by the sight of her niece, who was already in the driver's seat. "You are not going to try to manage that thing yourself! And without a hat, too! George, do you think it's right?"

"Bless your heart!" said Miss Enid, "I drove a car in the race last year between Cannes and Toulon."

The man, who meanwhile had set the engine in motion, hereupon took his place at her side; and the vehicle performing a very adroit evolution, swept away from the doorstep, and vanished between the walls of laurel.

"I do hope," gasped Lady Susannah, "that nothing dreadful will happen to her."

"I hope so, too," said Mr. Carlton; but there's a terrible corner at the bottom."

These alarms, however, were not of very long duration. Before five minutes were over, a hooting was again heard, and the car burst from the laurels, and arrested itself at the door-step panting. No sooner had this happened than a certain change was perceptible. The professional mechanician had been relegated to a back seat, and the seat next the driver was occupied by Sir Rawlin Stantor.

"He was coming to call," said Miss Enid, "so I just made him jump up."

The cordial welcomes with which Sir Rawlin was greeted, together with the obvious fact of Miss Enid's proficiency as a charioteer, combined to repress all further comments on her recklessness. Orders were given that the car should wait at the door; and Sir Rawlin was brought in to the sound of many reproaches for his late remissness in visiting Cliff's End and its occupants. He explained that of late his time had been taken up with addressing electors in the outlying parts of the constituency; and that he had moreover been engaged in some personal canvassing also.

"How soon," asked Miss Enid, "do you mean to have another go at it?"

Sir Rawlin replied that he intended that same afternoon to call on some electors in a fishing town about ten miles distant.

"Oh," said Miss Enid, "you just come with me. I'll rattle you to Jericho and back in less than no time, if you want it. And look here, Oswald—you've something to say to him about your embassy. You can come after all; and of course, Mr. Hugo, you. The more the merrier. Now, Sir Rawlin, are you afraid?"

Sir Rawlin declared with a laugh that he had never been afraid of anything; and matters were actually arranged in the way that Miss Enid had suggested. Sir Rawlin stipulated only that her pace should not be illegal, and that she should not kill his constituents before they had had time to vote for him. Oswald, who had heard from Lady Conway that she would be back at Southquay for Easter, was no longer so anxious as he had been to start for Constantinople immediately; and was able to enjoy the expedition without ulterior objects; whilst Mr. Hugo, who was engaged with a stop-watch in

timing the vehicle by the milestones, and publishing the results to his companions, almost felt as though he were himself the inventor; and talked about cranks and cylinders, carburetters, gears and batteries, in a manner so abstruse and impressive that the mechanician was struck dumb. Every one, in short, was delighted; and as for Miss Enid herself, she presently found other excitements beyond the exhilaration of driving. She discovered in Sir Rawlin an extraordinarily agreeable companion. With a happy adaptability he made her vocabulary his own; and exhibited so fraternal an interest in her sports, her escapades, and her opinions, that she not only told him how, on the occasion of her visit to Egypt, she had ridden into the desert astride, and dressed up as an Arab, but also revealed in confidence the details of her encounter with Mr. Barton, "who," she added, "thank goodnesss, has, I hear, popped over to France."

Nor did matters end here, for, when they reached their destination, and Sir Rawlin introduced himself to some fishermen who were lounging about the quay, she insisted on sticking close to him and listening to all he said. Presently she began making friends with these weather-beaten strangers on her own account; and her ready indignation at everything which they seemed to regard as grievances had, so Sir Rawlin assured her, secured for him more adherents than all the opinions or promises set forth by himself. In the shop of the principal draper she was no less successful. Sir Rawlin and the man, who was a Methodist, were discussing religious education, when Miss Enid, who was seated on the counter, interposed with a "Yes—that's right. Don't knuckle under to the priests. Sir Rawlin knows their tricks every bit as well as I do."

"I wish," said Sir Rawlin, as they were returning, "that I had you for a canvasser."

"What!" she exclaimed, "do you mean that? I'll tell you what, then—you *shall* have. I suppose I must pick up a bit of the lingo first; but I'll drive you about and listen. I shan't be long in learning."

"Well," said Sir Rawlin, laughing, "if your aunt makes no objection, and if you bring these cousins of yours, or Mr. George Carlton, as a chaperon, I should often be ready to say, in your own language, 'Done with you.'"

The result was that during the next few days Miss Enid Wynn, in her motor, driving the Conservative candidate, and accompanied by one of her cousins, became a frequent sight in Southquay, though a complication of veils, and occasionally a pair of goggles, would have made it difficult even for Lady Susannah to recognize her. All the voters whom she addressed—from shopkeepers down to knots of workmen—supposing her to be a relation of Sir Rawlin's, and not

knowing her name, were delighted with her. On anything male she had the knack of bestowing an attention which had something in it of individual flattery, and was totally different from the condescension of any official graciousness. All this had its advantages. At the same time it had its drawbacks, which Sir Rawlin explained, in answer to a question of Dr. Thistlewood's, when, before things had gone far, he was dining at the Turkish Castle.

"Miss Wynn," he said, "though a crude, is a very acute young lady—much more so than one would fancy when first one hears her speak. She picks up political arguments as quickly as she does scientific; but she's too great an aptitude, when she talks to any voter who is not decrepit, for turning his head, in addition to his prospective vote. One can see what happens from the way in which she speaks of it afterwards. 'The man,' she will say, 'with the curly hair told me this;' or 'The man with the mole on his cheek, and the laughing mouth, told me that.' And I caught her endorsing her satisfaction with the views of an auctioneer's clerk by a parting shake of the hand, which was certainly of needless length."

"It's possible," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that I may, one of these days, have something to confide to you about the young lady myself."

"She's going to take me," replied Sir Rawlin, "to a distant village to-morrow; but after that, I must manage to dispense with her services."

Sir Rawlin felt that to do this, without wounding her feelings, might be difficult; but circumstances, unforeseen by him, relieved him from all embarrassment. The visit to the village had been accomplished, and had proved satisfactory; but the girl herself had shown no wish to quit the vehicle. Her aspect also had undergone a certain change. She had discarded her veils; she was wearing a chauffeur's cap; and this, together with a frankly masculine coat, buttoned close under her chin, transformed her, for the ordinary observer, into the likeness of a fresh young man. Except for a remark that a man's dress was much more comfortable than a woman's, she made no allusion to this change in her attire, until the outlying lamp-posts of Southquay were once more drifting past them. Before them was a long white road, running close to the sea, and bordered by an asphalt trottoir, which was dotted with groups of pedestrians, few and far between. Suddenly the girl slackened speed, applying the brake with such vehemence that Mr. Hugo behind was thrown from his seat with ignominy.

"Find me my goggles," she said to Sir Rawlin. "Quick, please. I see in front of us that dreadful Colonel O'Brian, with one of his dreadful associates; and I don't want to have them staring at me."

The goggles were found and affixed with great rapidity, the car meanwhile crawling. Then speed was recovered, but it had not

become too great by the time when the Colonel and his sauntering companion were passed, to prevent Miss Enid, bold in her safe disguise, from returning their careless stare with one, considerably keener, of her own.

"That Colonel," she said, "makes me sick, and the creature with him is worse. Look here, you"—this was addressed to the mechanician—"you drive her the rest of the way. I'm tired, and will go behind."

From that day forward her enthusiasm as a canvasser ceased. Sir Rawlin was only too well pleased to accept her explanation that the excitement of the work was too much for her; and, indeed, when he heard, as he did hear, from Dr. Thistlewood, that for a couple of days subsequently she had not appeared in public anywhere, he was for the moment inclined to accept this explanation as correct. When a few more days had elapsed, he saw reason to reconsider his opinion.

Early one afternoon she arrived at the Turkish Castle, where Sir Rawlin happened to have been lunching, her object being to secure from Dr. Thistlewood some treatment for her wounded arm. This Dr. Thistlewood very promptly applied in the room which contained his gramophone and his other sets of apparatus; and the gramophone in especial having attracted his patient's notice, he proposed that she should commit to it some utterance of her own, and enjoy the experience of having it given back to her. Sir Rawlin and Lord Cotswold were summoned, in order that they might be present at the performance; and Sir Rawlin, drawing her aside, suggested in a confidential whisper that she should speak into the receiver an account of her duel with Mr. Barton. The girl started slightly, but did not appear displeased; and the others, though ignorant of the event to which Sir Rawlin alluded, begged that she would do in earnest what had been asked of her half in joke.

"Well," she said, "don't any of you give me away. Come, Dr. Thistlewood, stick me in the right place. How must I speak? So? All right. Here goes, then. My good aunt, who fancied I was a bit of a heathen, wanted me to see that tame cat of a priest of hers; and partly to please her—for she's an awfully good sort—and partly to see what an English priest was like, and whether he were really of the same breed as the rest—well, I just said I would." So she began, in tones placid enough; but as she proceeded, her memories of the scene described seemed more and more to excite her, and she spoke of Mr. Barton and the things which he held sacred in language compared with which what she had actually said to him was mild. If it had not been for the agreeable modulations of her voice, which gave to what she was saying a certain air of burlesque, Dr. Thistlewood himself would have felt that the exhibition was painful.

"Thank you," he said. "You have given me a very interesting

document. And now, young lady, I've got something else to ask of you. I've heard about your famous motor, and I should like to have a drive in it myself with you. Which day will you take me?"

The girl frowned. "Will the end of the week do?" she asked after some reflection. "I believe I shall be free then, and I'll take you, if you like it, to the other end of nowhere."

"Then that," said Dr. Thistlewood, "is an engagement. Look, Lord Cotswold is speaking to you. Would you like to go with him and see the outside of the house? He'll show you the great crack made in the wall by the lightning."

She assented to this proposal with alacrity; and when she and her guide were gone, Dr. Thistlewood addressed Sir Rawlin with a face graver than usual.

"You're lucky," he said, "in having got rid of your canvasser. That young woman is a very remarkable person. You, it is probable, only half understand her. You told me yourself a few odd things with regard to her. I can tell you some others, and I think I may as well do so. She's no more fit—have you ever suspected this?—to be trusted with a man—especially a man somewhat below her in station—than a child is to be trusted with a box of matches and gunpowder. My nurse here, who went with Miss Vivian to Malvern, was my first informant. She told me that Miss Wynn, driving a motor alone, has more than once been seen to pick up some one on foot—in each case a well-dressed male—whom she happened to overtake in one of the country roads, and has carried him off with her on a drive of unknown duration. One of these males was Martin—a clerk in an auctioneer's office. Another was a farrier from Wincombe. But that's not all. There's a man staying in this town, who calls himself an Italian count, and who has managed to get some access to what here calls itself society. Of this gentleman I believe that I know something, though I'm not yet perfectly sure. My Italian servant has been inquiring about him at the Italian pastry-cook's. If I am right, he's an impostor of the vilest kind. At all events he looks it, for I've passed him twice in the street. Well, this man, it seems, is the last of the favoured group that Miss Enid Wynn has been taking with her on these famous country excursions. She met him, apparently by appointment, at a place about three miles off, where the road crosses the railway; and the man who has charge of the gates—it's odd how these things come round to one—declares that the same man, walking with a military gentleman, the gates being then shut, had accosted the same young lady there, two or three days before; that some sort of scene ensued because she declined to engage in conversation with him, and that she nearly knocked him down with her car as soon as the gates were opened."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Sir Rawlin. "Why that must be the very man—a friend of Colonel O'Brian's—the very man whom she passed in the road when she was driving me home from a meeting. She had out her goggles the moment she set eyes on him; and when we went by him, she stared—I remember noticing this—as though she were not quite sure whether he were an old acquaintance or no. From her conduct directly afterwards I now conclude that she recognized him, and had every desire that he should not recognize her."

A curious smile formed itself on Dr. Thistlewood's lips. "I felt sure I was right," he said, with a slight nod. "I am, as you are aware, in the confidence of the young lady's family, and of the family doctor also. So for that reason, and perhaps for others, my mouth is sealed about some things. Could I only tell you all I know, and all I suspect as well, you would be both surprised and interested. Anyhow, Sir Rawlin, you may be really thankful for this, that Miss Wynn's aberrations have nothing to do with you. I only hope that they may give no trouble to her excellent relations at Cliff's End. About that I am not so sure. I shall do my best to prevent it."

CHAPTER VIII

WHATEVER Miss Wynn's faults in other respects might be, she was, at all events, true to her engagement with Dr. Thistlewood. Alone in her motor, the mechanician having been left behind, she reached the Turkish Castle at the hour and on the afternoon appointed, and greeted him with a smile, as he did not fail to observe, the unusual composure of which had a hint in it of malicious triumph.

"I told you," she said, "that by this time I should be free. I am; and I'm game to drive you to any mortal place you wish. What do you say? You want to go in the direction of Stoke Abbot? Well, if we do that, I must put on some new goggles. They cover one up better; for the dust on the Stoke road is simply enough to smother you."

He noticed that, while in the town, she avoided the more frequented streets and drove with almost needless caution; but even so, faces would be turned to look at her, expressive of a mystified and semi-derisive interest.

"It's a pity," Dr. Thistlewood began, as soon as they were out in the country, "that you don't happen to be standing for the Southquay Division yourself. From various little things I've heard, and from what I have seen just now, I gather that you've made a greater sensation here than the man who is the actual candidate."

The girl looked at him quickly. "Do you mean that for a sermon?" she said. "Your tone is like Mr. Barton's. I hope you're not going to remind me of that double-distilled idiot. Look here, Dr. Gustav, have some of the fools been telling you that I drive too fast? I've only knocked down one child—I wish it had been a certain man—but the brat wasn't hurt a bit; and I also went over two dogs and a chicken. But in each case I made things right on the spot. The child cost me a fiver—little blubbering fool. I say, has any one been making complaints to my aunt? Please, if they have, tell her I've a bee in my bonnet, and that nothing I do means anything. Don't preach any more, but say where you want to go. Three roads branch off on the other side of the railway

crossing. I shall take you at a rush past that, for I can't bear being hung up there; so hold on for all you're worth."

"I will ask you," said Dr. Thistlewood, "to take the first turning to the left. I've studied the map, and I know how the roads run. That one goes to a place which I'm very anxious to see—a town on the borders of Dartmoor, with many curious buildings. King's Hampton its name is. We can ask the way farther on, if we're ever in any doubt about it."

"King's Hampton," said the girl, frowning. "That's a rotten sort of place to go to, if the guide-books tell the truth. Still, if you've set your heart on it, I don't care. Why should I? We can just spin through the town, and come back by another road."

Dr. Thistlewood hereupon let the subject of their destination drop till the old-fashioned market-town, overlooking a wooded valley, came in sight, with its mellow red-brick houses and the huge tower of its church, beyond which slopes of moorland ascended towards a realm of crags. The girl at this point was beginning to quicken her pace, as though bent on giving King's Hampton as little of her presence as possible, when Dr. Thistlewood observed that his reason for wishing to visit it was his interest—an historical interest—in one of its public structures.

"Well," said the girl, "structures are nothing to me; and if there's anything I hate, it's waiting in a country street, where every child in the place comes buzzing round the car like a blue-bottle. If you want to look at your structure, I'd sooner wait for you here. I suppose that an hour will do you, and I promise not to run away."

Dr. Thistlewood assented, declaring that his projected exploration would probably be accomplished in a time even shorter than that named by her. His estimate was justified by events, and in less than half an hour he was again seated by her side.

"I did not," he said, as they started on their homeward journey, "find that King's Hampton was a rotten little place at all. Many of the houses looked to me particularly interesting. I went into only one of them. It was called the Lion Hotel. It was built in the reign of King William and Queen Mary. Under these sovereigns some strange events occurred in it. I had learnt that from one of the guide-books. Another strange event has occurred in it during the reign of King Edward. I learnt that from rumour, but I wished to be satisfied as to its accuracy. It appears to be really true that a young lady of some position, driving a motor whose number has enabled certain gossips to identify her, brought a stranger to this hotel—a man of curious aspect—and gave him luncheon in a private sitting-room with a very fine plaster ceiling. The gentleman, who drank a bottle of old Burgundy, and expressed himself in a foreign

language, became so excited at one stage of the proceedings, and stamped with such vigour on the floor, that the maid, approaching the door with an apple tart in her hands, thought there was going to be murder; and cautiously called the landlord. By the time the landlord appeared, the violence of the quarrel was subsiding; but both the listeners heard the young lady bring her guest to order by some threat spoken in English, the meaning of which was that she somehow had the whip-hand of him. I got this out of the landlord; and I managed to make light of the matter by telling him that the young lady was a foreigner, and that the man—a disreputable cousin of hers, obliged for political reasons to escape from his own country—had been trying to extort money from one relation after another, and had come to Southquay in order to victimize *her*. 'It's a pity,' I added, 'that he hasn't committed an offence against the laws of England, for then we could shut him up.'" Dr. Thistlewood fancied—but he could not be quite sure—that he heard his companion mutter between her teeth, "He has!" "I was happy to find," he continued, "that mine host both accepted my explanation, and was disappointed by it; and a little present which I made him will, I think, have the effect of preventing the spread of any gossip which will do much harm to anybody."

The girl's face, during the course of Dr. Thistlewood's narrative, had gradually clouded over, the colour on her cheeks had deepened, and she had affected an unnatural preoccupation with the management and mechanism of the car. At last, without turning to her companion, she said in a low and constrained tone—

"You're a ripper!—though you don't know one-half, nor even a damned quarter, of what you're talking about. Why," she continued presently, as if repenting of her magnanimity, "why didn't you say what's true—that I met that man at the golf club? Damn these stones! They tear one's tyres to pieces. You've heard everything wrong. What right have you to meddle? How did you hear what you did hear?"

"Hear it!" said Dr. Thistlewood, with a laugh. "There was not much difficulty in hearing it. It will be all we can do to prevent your aunt hearing it also. But this is not all I've heard. There's an auctioneer's clerk called Martin. You had a little flirtation with him in the office, when you played at canvassing. Your driving that man into the country with you was an act of incredible folly. When you look back over certain past events, don't you think so yourself?"

"I dare say it was silly," the girl answered ungraciously. "But what harm does it do me? Thank God, I'm not dependent on the tittle-tattle of Southquay tradesmen, though you, it appears, consider

their conversation interesting. My driving that man Martin was only a bit of a lark; and the same thing is true about that other man whom I met with old O'Brian on the golf-course. Your friend, the landlord, will bear witness that I knew how to put him in his place. And, damn it all, Dr. Thistlewood, why should you put your oar in? When Dr. Gonteau told you I'd been a bit off colour, and he and my people asked you to bring me to Cliff's End, I thought you were a brick. You made everything easy. I never fancied you would turn into a second Mr. Barton, and preach to me. I'm as strong as a horse now, and can manage my own business. Have I lost my nerve? Watch me as I dodge between those two carts."

"I am not preaching you a sermon," said Dr. Thistlewood, "on the ten commandments. Except for your own sake, and so far as I am concerned personally, you would, if you broke the whole of them, be only the more interesting. I am preaching to you, for your own sake, on the eleventh—'Thou shalt not be found out;' or, if you like it better, 'Always keep an eye on the consequences.' Look back, as I said before, on certain past events. Have they been barren of consequences from which, at this very moment, you would be glad enough if a friend like myself could shield you? Think it over, and don't speak till you've done so."

An expression of doggedness, mixed with sullen, obscure anxiety, had been gathering on the girl's face, and it was not until they had turned into the main road to Southquay that either of them spoke again. She, however, more than once had stolen a glance at Dr. Thistlewood, and had noticed, with a growing irritation, that he seemed to be unconscious of her existence—unless, indeed, it were some thought of herself that fed his eyes with the light of a half-cynical smile.

At last she could stand it no longer. "Well," she said, "what's the matter with you? Do speak out, and have done with it. What are those mysterious consequences, and what are those past events? You are surely not still making a Mont Blanc out of a mole-hill—I mean because I lunched with that man—I've forgotten his very name by this time—whom I met on the golf-course, and snubbed when he became impertinent? I never want to set eyes on his beastly face again."

"I am glad," said Dr. Thistlewood, turning to her, "that you have taken my advice, and thought. You say, however, that you have forgotten the name of the impertinent gentleman in question. Myself, I am quite familiar with it. Do you—may I ask, since you talk about past events—remember a street, older than the Lion Hotel, and perhaps even richer in associations, called the Via Caterina? In that street is an Albergo, frequented chiefly by

Italians. And do you also—this is taking you rather a long jump—remember another inn at a place called Tarbat? Tarbat is in one of the Hebrides. It is well known for its homespuns."

The girl made no answer, but the car suddenly swerved a little. It swerved for a second only, and her hands re-grasped the steering-wheel. The force with which they seemed to cling to the wooden rim was remarkable.

"In the books of those two inns," Dr. Thistlewood continued presently, "certain facts are recorded. They are these." He stooped towards her, and said something to her in a measured undertone. The girl's feelings were already highly strung; and the last word of this communication caused her to give a violent start; but the words which followed were not addressed to her companion.

"Hi! you there," she shouted to the driver of a baker's cart in front of them, "what the hell do you mean by not sticking to the right side of the road?"

"For Heaven's sake," exclaimed Dr. Thistlewood, "look out where you're going!"

He had hardly time to speak before the girl, agitated by her own emotions, had, in an effort to avoid touching the cart, run her right-hand wheels on to a road-mender's heap of stones. The car was not capsized, though the resulting shock was considerable, the driver with instinctive skill restoring it to its normal course; but in executing this manœuvre she failed to see that in front of her was a second vehicle, which had been hidden from observation by the first—a large waggon laden with protruding faggots. Again her instinctive skill saved her from a direct collision; but some of the twigs, or rather branches, struck her violently on the face, tearing the goggles from her face, slightly scratching her cheeks, and throwing her with a sideways lurch against the body of the man beside her. Luckily the car by this time was ascending a steep hill.

"Quick," said Dr. Thistlewood, laying his hands on the steering-wheel. "Change places at once. I can drive as well as you can."

The girl turned on him a pale consenting look; the change was effected, she was hardly conscious how; and subsiding into her new position, she pressed her hands to her eyes.

"Are your eyes hurt?" he asked curtly, but not unkindly. "The scratch on your cheek is nothing."

She removed her hands, and looked at him, like a child obeying orders.

"I can see you," she said. "Damn it, I'm not blind!" She spoke with intelligence, but yet with a certain apathy.

"Listen," said Dr. Thistlewood. "Do you think you can understand what I am saying to you? I'm not going to frighten your friends at Cliff's End about you. I shall tell them one thing only—that some sticks in a waggon hit you—that your eyes are inflamed—that you've had a severe shaking—that you will have to be kept and looked after in a dark room for a week—and that, instead of taking you home, I have, on my own responsibility, committed you to the care of a nurse at the Turkish Castle, where I shall myself be able to watch you from day to day."

CHAPTER IX

"You may," said Dr. Thistlewood to Lady Susannah a few days later, "be quite easy in your mind about Miss Wynn. She has suffered no damage—not even a scratch—which nature, and a darkened room, won't very soon have cured. The wonder is she was not killed. One thing, however, my dear lady, is plain—she mustn't come back to you. If she did, there's no knowing what mischief she would be up to next. About that point, her father is quite determined."

"Yes," said Lady Susannah, with an odd whimsical smile. "I have heard from him myself also. I don't think I could, with the best will in the world, be responsible for her much longer. You'll allow me to come, won't you, and see her before she goes? There'd be something so forlorn in her slipping off without a word."

Dr. Thistlewood shrugged his shoulders. "Well," he said, "in a day or two you might do that, if you wished it; but she's not yet in a mood for any family interviews. She knows she has made a fool of herself, though her obstinacy won't admit it; and you may take the state of her temper as evidence of her physical strength. I honestly believe that the kindest thing you can do is to let her go off quietly, without what she would feel as the humiliation of any parting scene."

"If that's still your opinion when the time for her departure comes," said Lady Susannah, "I'll be guided by it. I see your point. What seems the unkind thing is sometimes really the kindest."

"And now," said Dr. Thistlewood, "I think, though I'm not perfectly certain, that, without raising false hopes, I may tell you something that will please you. Miss Vivian, from what I have learnt this morning, seems on the road to her own recovery also; and I hope it may be my pleasant office, when I have seen Miss Wynn off safe and sound on her journey, to bring Miss Nest back to you, equally safe and sound. I can't name the day, but it won't be very far distant."

Lady Susannah's face lit up with pleasure. Her misgivings with regard to Miss Enid disappeared from her consciousness; and, when she communicated to her family the prospect of Nest's return, a spirit of pleasure and excitement diffused itself through the entire house. Days, however, went on, and, so far as Dr. Thistlewood was concerned, nothing farther was heard of this desired event; but one morning, from quite another quarter, Lady Susannah found herself the recipient of news relating to it. The news came through a letter, and the writer of the letter was Mr. Barton.

"DEAR LADY SUSANNAH" (he wrote),

"I thank God very humbly for the light which He is now permitting to shine through my doubts and darkness. You will, I believe, understand the conflict of feelings with which I prepared to approach, in the mood necessary for the occasion, a parent whose marriage is no marriage in the eyes of any true Christian. When I called first at their villa, Captain and Mrs. Vivian were absent, but were expected back shortly, so I waited at Cimiez for their return. At last I saw him. The ways of the human heart are wonderful. It seems to me that his errors have been due to weakness. He is kind and generous to the poor here. It is grievous to think that he cannot work with the Church. He received me with perfect courtesy, and, when I had finished my explanations, he treated me with a kindness which brought tears to my eyes. He told me that my wishes had his entire approval. There, however, he stopped short; for when I asked him where she was, he absolutely refused to tell me. I ought here to admit one thing. The father's reticence shows me that I was wrong in my suspicions that all this mystery was of Dr. Thistlewood's making. Captain Vivian insisted that till his daughter was absolutely recovered, no friend was to write to her, or approach her, or hold any communication with her whatsoever, or find where or how she was being treated. But whilst this conversation was in progress, Captain Vivian received a telegram. As he read it, a change came over his whole expression. He handed me the telegram to read, and what do you think it was? 'Recovery of N. V. in a few days almost certain. Will bring her back to Lady S. probably in course of week.' The telegram had no signature. I assume it was from Dr. Thistlewood. I did not even think of asking. Thank God—thank God! If possible, I shall start by earliest train to-morrow, hoping soon to see you all again, and to take my thankful part in our own Easter Services."

The following morning, not long after breakfast, Dr. Thistlewood

himself inquired for Lady Susannah; and she saw from his face that he brought with him some intelligence.

"Miss Vivian will be back," he said, "before the end of the week. As for Miss Wynn, please be guided by me, and don't attempt to have any parting scenes. She doesn't wish it herself. Leave her to me and the nurse, and suppose that she has gone already. And now, my dear lady, I can't tell you any more, for I'm on my way to the station. I have to be in London for a night, and I'm travelling with our friend Sir Rawlin. Have you seen the morning paper? He's in—Sir Rawlin is in—with a five-hundred majority. I dare say that, with these domestic anxieties, you'd forgotten that the poll was yesterday, or that there was to be an election at all."

"I am," said Lady Susannah, "indeed, delighted to hear that—for our own sakes, and for his sake too. Sir Rawlin was devoted to Nest, and you know what he's done for Oswald. We've hardly seen him lately. I suppose he hasn't had much time. And now, before you go, I should like to show you a letter. I'm not betraying secrets, for I know you are in the writer's confidence. The telegram he mentions was, I suppose, sent by you."

Dr. Thistlewood took a rapid survey of Mr. Barton's closely written pages.

"Yes," he said, "the telegram was mine. Poor man, I had divined his secret long before he confided it to me. Don't you think he may find that he's reckoning without his hostess?"

"No," replied Lady Susannah, "I assure you you're quite wrong there. Nest has told him quite plainly—I had this from himself—that her feeling for him was the same as his for her. They quite understand each other. There's no doubt about that."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Thistlewood. "That interests me. I suppose this confession took place—let me see if I can guess when. Was it on the afternoon of the day after Lord Cotswold's party, when the invalid had had a temporary recovery, and came downstairs for a little? It was—was it? I thought so. Well, we shall see what happens. And now, good-bye. Most likely when we next meet I shall be bringing the young lady with me."

Mr. Barton, while his affairs were being thus discussed, was already approaching Paris—the happiest and the gravest passenger on the slow train called a "rapide." The French Riviera had at one time been well known to him. On his outward journey he was blind to all its remembered beauty; but its blue skies, its aloes, and the sparklings of its white houses, seen through the windows of his carriage as he started on his way home, shone for him like the celestial city, and were charged with a promise which he never had known of old. He looked out in the glow of the dazzling noon at the ancient towers of Tarascon, remembering bits of buildings which

he had himself once sketched, or fixed his eyes on some far-off mountain sanctuary, to whose immemorial pieties his heart made a new pilgrimage, thinking that some day he might kneel there with another life beating at his side. Then, as he sped northward, and cypress and olive vanished, and Gothic spire and pinnacle showed above half-fledged branches, he saw himself bringing at Whitsuntide his bride-elect to her Confirmation. Then would follow the day of her first Communion, and then, a week or so later, the sacred rapture of marriage, with a voice from Eden breathing through pointed English arches.

It was midnight when he reached Southquay, and he remained, after a hasty supper, for a long hour in prayer. The act of prayer itself, he found, had acquired a new character. No less intense than formerly, it was accompanied by a less painful strain. Approaching the feet of his Master hand in hand with the loved one, her love seemed to surround him, and his divine Master also, with an atmosphere of reconciliation altogether strange to his experience. Lines of poetry—some of them from Shelley, the unbeliever—mixed themselves with his orisons, and became a congruous part of them. Next morning, when he went into the garden, before the dews were dry, the air and the fresh scents went through him with their promise and welcome, and with bent head, and in words almost articulate, he ejaculated "Lord, Thou hast married me to Thy creature, the Spring, also." He even found himself repeating lines which to him had before been meaningless—

> "What are all these kisses worth,
> If she kiss not me?"

Trivial things tread on the heels of the serious. They did so in Mr. Barton's case when, before sitting down to breakfast, he handed a note to his maid-servant, which informed Lady Susannah of his arrival, and which he desired that a messenger might take to Cliff's End at once. He was not much given to casual conversation with his attendant; but often, when he had, as now, returned after some days' absence, he would ask her how she was, and whether there were any news. He did so on the present occasion, as he put the letter into her hands, expecting nothing but a smile, and the customary formal answer. The smile, indeed, came punctually, but it was at once much broader and more charged with meaning than usual, and was followed by news of a very definite kind.

"You won't have heard, sir," she said, "what's been going on at Cliff's End."

Mr. Barton in general discouraged all private tale-bearing, but necessity knows no laws, and he hastily exclaimed—

"No. What?"

"Why, since you've been away, sir," said the maid, who needed little encouragement, "the young lady who's been staying there has set everybody in the place talking. She began by going about with Sir Rawlin Stantor canvassing, till he couldn't stand it no longer. She was hand and glove, they say, with all the young fellows in the town, and she took Martin, the auctioneer's clerk, and some others, and an outlandish foreign nobleman, quite alone and lover-like, for jaunts with her into the country, and she nearly smashed the car—for 'twas all done in a motor—when the strange doctor was with her, and she hurt her eyes—I don't think she was blinded—and was taken to the Turkish Castle to be under the doctor's care."

Mr. Barton contracted his face into an expression of appropriate disapproval, under cover of which he said quickly—

"And is the young lady at the Turkish Castle still?"

The maid replied that she did not know for certain, but had heard "as how the young lady was to be took away."

"When I saw her," said Mr. Barton, "I thought she was likely to be rash. I trust that nothing serious has happened to her. Very well, Susan; will you give that letter to Richards? And stay—did the organist come here to see me yesterday?"

The intelligence which he had just heard was, in one way, not displeasing to him, since it showed how perverted principles translated themselves into monstrous acts; and the annoyance caused him by what seemed at least the chance that Miss Wynn might be in the neighbourhood still, real though it was, was slight. She had in any case left Cliff's End, even if Miss Vivian had not actually come; and there was, he felt convinced, no danger of her returning. For the rest, the thought of all those indecent follies merely renewed, and indeed gave a sharper edge to, the indignation which she had originally aroused in him by the atrocities both of her mind and language. An insult to things and beliefs which they hold supremely sacred affects such men as Mr. Barton like a blow struck at themselves, except for the fact that they hold themselves bound to avenge, not pardon it. Had there been an Inquisition in England, Mr. Barton would have been an Inquisitor; and Miss Wynn might well have been in danger of the dungeon, if not the stake. The Inquisitor's bitterness, however, sank at once into abeyance when a tray was presented to him on whose black japanned surface lay a letter from Lady Susannah—her prompt answer to his own. He received it with the reverence due to some gift from heaven. Its contents, though not quite all, were nearly all he had hoped for.

"Enid," it said, "who was finding this place too dull for her, received, the other day, a shock when driving herself in a motor-car. She only just escaped what might have been a most frightful accident. Dr. Thistlewood, who has some rooms, which he has

furnished for future patients, in a wing of the Turkish Castle, is taking her under his care till she leaves, and will bring back Nest to us at the earliest possible moment, as soon as poor Enid has taken her departure for good. This will probably be to-morrow, or at latest the day after. I will send you a note as soon as I know for certain, and I believe I shall be doing right—though I cannot be quite sure—in arranging that you shall meet her at the very first opportunity."

There was one phrase here which gave him some slight disquiet. What did Lady Susannah mean by saying that "she was not quite sure"? It was obvious, he said to himself, when he had thought the matter over, that Miss Vivian's extreme youth, and the chance of her thus not knowing her own mind, had been troubling Lady Susannah with scruples, which in her case were natural enough, but which were to himself ludicrous. The object of his love had, with the perfect candour of innocence, made an avowal of her feelings for him even before he had dared to ask it; and the only temptations to any change of mind which might threaten her, were merely such physical weaknesses as would call for a husband's aid.

Throughout that day, which he gave up to parish business, he was agitated by what he knew to be the premature hope that the post or a messenger would bring him another letter, summoning him to Cliff's End at some stated hour to-morrow; but night came, without any such letter reaching him, and, waking early next morning with a lover's pleasurable restlessness, he found himself sallying forth towards the well-remembered path by the sea, where he and Miss Vivian had indulged in their first intimate conversation, and his personal attachment to her had troubled him with its first obscure premonitions.

His shortest way to this path lay down a sloping field, from the higher parts of which the turrets of the Turkish Castle could be seen on one side, and the ilexes of Cliff's End on the other, and from both homesteads silvery streaks of smoke were beginning to go up towards the blueness, in the wake of the singing larks. All the youth of the world, and all the purities of the spirit blew up to Mr. Barton from the bosom of the morning sea. Like Wordsworth, "he read unutterable love" in everything.

The seaward path, towards which he was descending slowly, hidden though it was at intervals by gorse-bushes, clumps of trees, and the irregular configurations of the ground, was nevertheless visible to him for the larger part of its course. He fancied, as he looked, that he could almost identify her footprints at certain places which he associated with certain words of hers, and certain expressions of her face. There she had quoted Shelley to him; there—a little farther on—some uplifting of the spirit had brought tears to

her eyes; and there he had given her his gifts—the incense and his "Secret Way." All these memories now mingled with happy promises—not for to-day perhaps, but for to-morrow, or the day after. He could afford to wait, since waiting seemed itself to be such an act of rapture.

Experiences of this kind are enhanced by, if they do not always require, those conditions of silence and seclusion which Mr. Barton was now enjoying. His feelings, therefore, suffered a momentary, though not a very serious, disturbance, when he suddenly realized that from the direction of the Turkish Castle, two figures were moving along the path which he was about to join, the one following the other at a distance of some dozen yards. Both were women. The hindmost of them was evidently of a sober age, and moved with a determined and not very elegant stride. The other, as evidently, was young; she had the gait of a lady, and, in accordance with a tendency, very common amongst expectant lovers, to see the expected object in any distant figure of the same age and sex, Mr. Barton was visited by what he recognized as the fantastic idea that the foremost of these matutinal wanderers was none other than Miss Vivian herself.

To this idea, like most lovers under similar circumstances, though he did not accord it his belief, he surrendered the control of his actions; and hastening his pace, he made for a small thicket which the seaward pathway traversed, and from which, if he could reach it soon enough, he would be able, without exposing himself, to observe the grotesque difference between his fancy and actual fact. His activity was such that he was hidden in a shelter of firs and brambles, just at the moment when both the figures observed by him were approaching a difficult stile at a level somewhat lower than his own. For a minute he could see neither of them, but he heard with extreme distinctness the elder of the two calling out to the younger, "I really can't allow you to go a single step farther. Dr. Thistlewood's orders were that I was to bring you back by nine. And you've been and put on those things which I told you not to wear. You know that they're not yours. They were left in the wardrobe by mistake."

At the mention of Dr. Thistlewood's name Mr. Barton started violently, and shifted his position so as to see who the speaker and her companion were. The speaker was evidently an attendant who had some kind of authority, and the person addressed—— Mr. Barton could hardly believe his eyes. It actually seemed to him that his wild idea was true; for the person addressed, unless his senses were playing him false, was the living image of Miss Vivian.

Surprise paralyzed him. He stared again to see if he was not deceiving himself. Then his heart sank, and he felt that he had

been his own dupe. The hat and coat she was wearing—he knew them only too well. They were those worn by Miss Wynn on her arrival in her aunt's drawing-room. He had never seen such articles on the person of a lady before. What madness could have induced him to take this girl for her sister? He looked once more and then he understood the reason. Her hair, which she was accustomed to wear so arranged as to suggest a boy's, had now been crimped and curled in close imitation of Miss Vivian's, and had thus given to her face the likeness which had deceived his fancy. He also noticed that the edge of a braided skirt, which appeared below her coat with its large masculine buttons, closely resembled one which he remembered Miss Vivian wearing. It was doubtless to this garment that her companion had just alluded. So Miss Enid Wynn had not yet gone after all. But what, he began to ask himself, was the meaning of these new oddities?

His mental question was interrupted by the sound of the girl's voice.

"I had to come out," she said, in a tone which was not distinctive. "I couldn't find some of my own things, so I took what I could lay my hands upon. And look here—is it necessary for me to keep this on any longer?"

"Oh!" said the woman, reassuringly, "you're worrying about that, are you? No. Dr. Thistlewood said particularly that that was to come off now."

Mr. Barton moved forward for an inch or two, in order to see what fresh point was at issue. The girl was leaning against the stile, and one of her hands was resting on the topmost bar. From the wrist, for a distance of some inches up the arm, Mr. Barton recognized the long strip of black sticking-plaster like that which, as he well remembered, Miss Wynn had been fixing in its place, when the character of the costume in which she appeared before him had only astonished him less than the conversation that followed it.

In a moment an illuminating thought made him feel that he had solved the riddle. This girl, Miss Wynn, before finally quitting the scenes of her recent misdemeanours, was preparing to cover her retreat with one last reckless prank. She was going to revisit Cliff's End dressed up as Miss Vivian, and convert the welcome that would meet her into the comedy of a new farewell. In all probability her part was being now rehearsed. Except for the hat and coat, her disguise was complete already. In the course of the morning these defects would be doubtless remedied, and then, unless she should be hindered, the play would be played out. No wonder, so Mr. Barton reflected, Dr. Thistlewood was anxious that these sisters should not meet, and that one of them should not arrive till the other was safely gone. As to the trick itself, Mr. Barton, though he

had no humour in him, could yet imagine that fools might find in it food for laughter, and the idea of it having once occurred to him, caused him no surprise. Degrading as it was, there was morally no great harm in it. It might, moreover, never be carried out, and for various reasons, he felt no call to interfere with it. One of these reasons was a reluctance, now intensified, to come into personal contact again with this girl whom his presence might exasperate into fresh blasphemies; and a fear that if, during the course of the present day, he should call at Cliff's End to hear when Miss Vivian was expected, Miss Wynn might still be there in the act of deceiving the family, made him resolve that his visit should in any case be put off till to-morrow, by which time the possibility of all such incidents would be over.

All at once it occurred to him—for he was naturally a most honourable man—that, in lingering where he was, he was playing the part of an eavesdropper; and that nothing would justify him in remaining to hear more. He accordingly managed to withdraw himself to a discreet distance, his movement being favoured by a hedge; and feeling that to look was more legitimate than to listen, he presently satisfied himself that both the subjects of his observation were taking their way back again in the direction of the Turkish Castle, and that he, on his homeward course, would be safe from the attention of either of them.

His first care on regaining his own house was to write to Lady Susannah, explaining that he would be unable, in any case, to call at Cliff's End before to-morrow, but begging her to tell him of the event when Miss Vivian had actually arrived, and adding that he would then present himself without a moment's unnecessary delay.

Meanwhile at Cliff's End preparations were in happy progress for the absentee's return. Dr. Thistlewood himself made his appearance in the morning, and, closeted with Lady Susannah, gave her various hints, which he requested her to communicate to her family, with regard to the manner in which her niece should be treated; nor was he content till he had interviewed Miss Vivian's maid also, securing attention to his orders by a very handsome gratuity. Of Miss Wynn he merely said—

"We couldn't get her off our hands quite as soon as we had hoped to do; but every trace of the accident has by this time disappeared, and her father will assure you, should you wish to make inquiries—though I don't advise you to do so, for I think it would only trouble him—that for some time at least she'll get into no more mischief. As for Miss Vivian, I shall meet her, and bring her, when we reach Southquay, to the Turkish Castle for an hour or so—a step I could not take before—and then drive her over, and restore her to you, late in the afternoon to-morrow."

The whole of the following morning Miss Arundel and the discreet maid devoted themselves to the task of getting Miss Vivian's rooms in order. Her boxes were unpacked; her clothes were disposed in wardrobes; her books were taken from their hiding-places, and arranged in their old stations. Even the box of incense again stood on the chimneypiece; and the properties of Miss Wynn, from her wading-boots, her fish-hooks, and her sporting novels upwards, were relegated to their old receptacles, ready to be forwarded, when necessary, as her parents or Dr. Thistlewood might direct.

Late that evening Mr. Barton received a letter from Lady Susannah, which threw some light on the nature of Dr. Thistlewood's communications with herself.

"DEAR MR. BARTON" (she wrote),

"At last I have good news for you. Dr. Thistlewood called this morning, and told me certain things which throw some sort of light on the nature of Nest's late illness, and which, when we talk to her, he wishes us all to remember. Like most people, he says, who have suffered in the same way, she has no idea of the time for which her illness has lasted. It seems to her to be no more than a week. Indeed, she fancies that during this supposed week, except for the last two days, when she was taken away for change of air, she has been kept at the Turkish Castle, where she fell asleep, as you know, directly after the thunderstorm. It all seems very odd and muddled, but Dr. Thistlewood says that there's nothing in it at all unusual. He says, however, that at first the right thing is to humour her, and accept what she appears to think, and not puzzle her by making a fuss about it. For this reason he has put off her return till to-morrow, for he wants, before bringing her here, to take her to the Turkish Castle, where some of her things have been sent, so as to keep up the illusion. You will, I am sure, agree that the little deception is harmless. I tell you all this, so that you may do what we are doing, and avoid saying anything which might show how long she has been unwell really. You would probably wish that your first meeting with her should be private; so I will not ask you to be here on her arrival. I will tell her, unless I hear from you to the contrary, that you will call to inquire for her the day after, at your usual hour; and, of course, I shall not hint at any suspicion on my part as to your intention in coming, or her expectations in receiving you."

CHAPTER X

"NEST, my dearest Nest," such was Lady Susannah's exclamation when, gently pushed forwards by Dr. Thistlewood, Miss Vivian made once more her appearance in the Cliff's End drawing-room; and Miss Arundel and her brothers, together with Mr. George Carlton, who, from motives of economy and affection, was condescending to prolong his visit, each added a contribution to the general chorus of welcome.

As Mr. Carlton afterwards put it in his own elegant language, "she stood there as if she were just out of a bandbox, all slimness and *écru*, with her coat caught in at her waist, and her delicious little black gloves matching her crisp black hat, whose distracting brim had a curl in it like a breaking wave." For a moment she hesitated with a laughing apology in her eyes, as though her absence and illness had been due to some fault or folly of her own. A moment later her aunt's arms had been round her; and, Miss Arundel having made a maidenly peck at her cheek, she was drinking a cup of tea, no longer a stranger.

In the opinion of all her friends she had never been looking better; and in honour of the occasion Dr. Thistlewood, though not dressed, was readily induced to remain at Cliff's End for dinner. Lady Susannah was not slow in divining that one of his reasons for doing this was a wish by his own behaviour to set an example of how his late patient should be treated. He did not fail to say that she had made a very rapid recovery, nodding to her pleasantly over a glass of champagne as he did so; but his tone and manner made light of her whole malady, and his sole farther allusion to it was not expressed directly, but only implied in his telling, and inviting others to tell her of various events which had happened while she was, as he said, "laid up." Nor was she, as she sat amongst them, in her tea-gown whose rosy silks whitened round her throat and wrists in a foam of lace and chiffon, a spectacle to invite condolences. One of the pieces of news which gave vivacity to the occasion was that Oswald's departure for Constantinople was now definitely arranged; on hearing which she forthwith discomposed him by an allusion to some of his romantic Eastern sketches. "You will soon yourself,"

she said, "be making love in a turban." Oswald's blushes, however, had ample time to subside while the farther news was being imparted to her of the Southquay election and its result. Then the blush was transferred from Oswald's cheeks to hers, and she showed a considerable reluctance to quit this important subject until, as the meal was ending, the fact was casually mentioned that Sir Rawlin had gone to London, to take his seat in the House, where he had met with the most flattering reception. Over the brightness of the girl's face there passed something like a faint cloud-shadow. Her eyes fixed themselves on her plate, and Dr. Thistlewood, whom nothing escaped, saw a movement of her silks and laces, which, while masking, revealed a sigh.

"Of course," he hastened to add, "when this session is over, as it will be in a few days, our member is coming back for Easter, to thank his loyal constituents." The girl threw a quick glance at him, which she no less quickly withdrew; and a movement of her laces followed, even more unmistakable than the first. "I'll tell you what," he said to Lady Susannah, "you mustn't allow that young person to go sitting up late this evening. Put her to bed. That's my parting prescription, and let us hope it will be long before she wants another. As for me, I must be getting back to my host. Sleep well," he said to the girl, who smiled at him with confidential gratitude, "and pleasant dreams to you—or, better still, no dreams at all."

Dr. Thistlewood's parting benediction had apparently the best results. Miss Vivian, next morning, somewhat pensive indeed, but with a pensiveness which was highly becoming to her, and did nothing to dim her freshness, took up the threads of her life again as though none had been broken; and Lady Susannah, on mentioning Mr. Barton's name to her, and the fact that he was hoping to come and see her that afternoon, was interested to observe the pleasure with which she received the news.

As for Mr. Barton himself, everything was done that could be done to render his visit easy for him. Lady Susannah despatched a farther note to him, to say that her niece would expect him at half-past five, adding that he need not trouble himself to inquire for anybody else, but would find her, on his arrival, awaiting him in the green boudoir.

As the hour drew near his agitation increased. Occupation became impossible for him; his own rooms felt like a prison, and once again he did what he had done yesterday—he went over the hill to the path by the cliff's edge, so that even before he met her he might enjoy the sense of her neighbourhood, and watch the tops of the ilexes, whose shadows again sheltered her. The landscape to-day held no other human being but himself. The sinister figure

of Miss Enid Wynn was absent. Whatever mischief she had been planning two days ago, she had gone without accomplishing it; for the fact of departure was now beyond a doubt, and the air seemed lighter in consequence. And yet, for a moment, the recurrence of her image troubled him, coming like a cloud between him and his own approaching bliss. Here, he reflected, were two immortal souls, committed by God to bodies in many ways closely similar, and surrounded also by closely similar conditions, and yet making such different returns to Him for His love, and for His gift of life. "That wretched child," he said to himself. "She received the sacrament of Confirmation snickering at it. What must have been her first, indeed her only Communion? That single act of sacrilege would be enough to account for everything. A case like this at all events teaches us one thing—that no likeness whatever between two physical organisms can impose any common fatality on the two souls which inhabit them. It's a pity that men like this wonderful Dr. Thistlewood are blind to the meaning of facts which are lying at their own doors." Here was a thought which braced him, and under its stimulus the image of Miss Wynn faded, and its place was occupied wholly by one to whom spiritual aspiration was as natural an act as breathing, and to think of whom was to praise God. "Tantum ergo sacramentum," he murmured, with his coming marriage in his heart. He looked at his watch. The appointed hour was near, and at once with eager strides he began to hurry towards the garden gate.

In spite of the delay he had imposed on himself he was a little before his time; and when he was ushered into the green boudoir he found himself alone with his expectancy. The air was alive with sacred and overpowering memories. There were the china cups with which Miss Vivian had trifled, as she stood coming to terms with her own inmost thoughts, just before her manner had undergone its abrupt change, and she had turned round at last and begun to open her heart to him. There, too, by the fire, was the chair into which, like a drift of rose-petals, she had sunk when she called him to her side. On one of its walnut-wood arms he could still see her hand resting. He could still see the mystery of the heavens in the invitation of her languid eyes. There, too, was the spot where he himself had knelt. For a moment he knelt again, and kissed the piece of walnut carving on which her hand had rested. He had just risen when a shadow crossed the window, and he caught sight of a flicker which he knew to be Miss Vivian's dress.

A few seconds later the door had opened, and she was before him. On her breast was a bunch of violets, and a miracle amongst scarlet caps mixed itself mysteriously with her hair.

"Mr. Barton," she exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you

again!" In her manner there was a slight melancholy, but her eyes sparkled with welcome; and her hand in its white glove held his with a firm pressure, unlike the brusque withdrawal familiar to him in former days. Still he experienced a certain perplexed disappointment. This was not quite the greeting he had counted on, when he rehearsed the scene in expectation. She was not resuming their intercourse exactly where it had left off. He was able, however, to make infinite allowances. A young girl, whose feelings were naturally of an exquisite delicacy, might not find it easy, he reflected, to bring herself, after a long separation, into the mood which had accompanied an unconventional expression of her love; and his chivalry was already forbidding him to take any premature advantage of it. He was, indeed, beginning to feel embarrassed himself, though his own love, under the surface, was more wildly alive than ever. He would take his time. Their complete reunion should be gradual, and, meanwhile, he withdrew his eyes from their reverent contemplation of her lips.

"They say," she continued, "that I've been ill for I don't know how many days. Well, I suppose it's true. Something like this has happened to me once or twice before. Do you know, it would seem to me, if I went by my own impressions, that I saw you only yesterday."

"Would it?" exclaimed Mr. Barton, his voice at once growing eager. "It seems to me not only that I saw you yesterday, but that I have seen you always—every moment since your illness kept you from us. It seems to me that I have never seen anything else."

"You," she said gently, "have always been very good to me. If things were ever to go wrong with me, I feel that I should turn to you, and you would show me the way out. But I can't quite tell yet. Last night, Mr. Barton, I was reading your own book again."

"Were you?" said Mr. Barton. "Were you? I gave my soul to that book. May I think that my poor little book is giving my soul to yours? Look at me. Look at me. I was beginning—do you know what I was beginning to do? I was beginning to wonder for a moment whether you had forgotten our last meeting. Tell me, tell me truly, do you still remember what we said at it?"

Miss Vivian sank into the chair which she had occupied on the former occasion.

"Do you think," she said, with a glance of friendly reproach at him, "that I am at all likely to forget? You must think me very superficial if you do."

Mr. Barton took a chair near hers, murmuring as he did so, "Yes, sit there—sit there. You were sitting there when I left you."

"Dear Mr. Barton," she continued, "I remember all our

meetings. This wretched little illness of mine has not made me a fool. I remember what you said at each of them. The last one—yes, I remember that best of all."

Mr. Barton leaned quickly forwards, and laid his hand on hers. Her own was at once withdrawn; but, as though to atone for this proceeding, she leaned in turn towards him, and fixed on him eyes full of that inward sadness, which requires so little to turn it into the longings and the dreams of a devotee.

"Yes," she continued, "at our last meeting you spoke about the soul which cannot die, which can be injured by itself only, and which will be our living fate for ever. You spoke, too, about the Blessed Sacrament, and about the uplifting of our whole natures; and you said that God demanded these of us, and would satisfy all their longings for what is high and beautiful, giving us even more than we can imagine. You are the only person who has ever really shown me how religion means the satisfaction of our natures taken as a whole, and is not merely something that we have to do with in church-time, or during our private prayers. And you asked me to think of you—this touched me very much—as being yourself my companion and helper in efforts which must be made by both of us. No, you see I have not forgotten what you said at our last meeting."

Mr. Barton, as he listened to these words, had grown gradually paler, and his head had begun to swim.

"I think," he answered faintly, "that the meeting when I said all or any of these things to you was not our last."

"I'm sure it was," she said, with a semi-playful insistence. "Not that it makes much matter whether it was the last or first, for, whichever it was, I should remember the impression you made upon me. But still, if you insist, I'll prove that I'm right, in a minute or two. There's a pin or something which is pricking me. Just let me put that right first."

As she spoke she rose and, unbuttoning one of her gloves, went to the window, whose shutters were panelled with strips of looking-glass. In a state bordering on stupefaction, Mr. Barton rose and followed her. The idea had occurred to him of helping her in the impending rearrangement of her toilette, of thus getting possession—he hardly knew how—of her person, and forcing her to acknowledge that interview which she could not mean to repudiate. By the time he reached it, she was busy with a small brooch. The glove which she had begun to unbutton had now been at length drawn off. The evening light shone full on her delicate hand and wrist, and there, from the wrist upwards, disappearing into the shadow of the sleeve, Mr. Barton saw a scar precisely corresponding in its course to a strip of black plaster which, on another occasion, had been pressed to the arm of a girl habited as an Albanian boy.

"Now I'm all right," said Miss Vivian with a slight laugh, the brooch having been rearranged, and the offending pin refastened. "And now, Mr. Barton, I'll prove to you, by a few dates, that the last time we met here was—but what in the world is the matter with you? Why do you look like that at me? Are you ill? I'm afraid you must be."

Mr. Barton's face was by this time colourless. "A little," he faltered—"a little perhaps. But it's nothing. It will pass." His voice ceased, and she stared at him. "I am feeling," he said, "slightly dizzy. May I, for just one moment, ask you for the support of your hand?"

She did as he asked, and aided by her he managed to reach the chimneypiece. He leaned against this for a minute or so, while the girl watched him anxiously. Then, unable apparently to bear the heat of the fire, he jerked his body forwards, gained a neighbouring chair, and extracting his pocket-handkerchief, began absently to mop his forehead.

"Tell me," he said, gasping, "how did you hurt your wrist? I hardly know whom I'm talking to."

"My wrist!" exclaimed Miss Vivian with surprise. "I can't tell how I hurt it. Dr. Thistlewood knows. I must somehow have got it scratched when I was ill—by a nail in the bed-post—he told me—I forget. It was something like that, I think. But my scratch is nothing. The mark will soon be gone. Don't let us talk of my wrist. Mr. Barton, what is it? Let me ring the bell for some one. Shall we send for a doctor? Shall we send for Dr. Thistlewood?"

"Not for the world," he exclaimed, raising himself with a spasmodic effort; "though I believe I shall have to go to *him*. It was only a little giddiness. It's passing away already. But I won't stop longer this afternoon. A walk in the open air—that will make me all right again. Good-bye. Don't ring, I beg of you. I can find my own way out."

He had opened the door and was disappearing, when Miss Vivian called out after him—

"Mr. Barton, Mr. Barton, aren't you going to take your hat? Look, you were going away with my aunt's knitting instead."

That evening Dr. Thistlewood received the following letter:—

"When I asked you in vain for certain news of Miss Vivian during her illness I explained to you the nature of my interest in her. I may add in passing that I have now explained myself to her father, and my wishes have his full sanction. I must ask you to be patient whilst I put the matter more minutely. Miss Vivian, just after her recovery from the first effects of the thunderstorm—on a day when you yourself pronounced that she was fit to receive a

visitor—told me with the utmost deliberation, and with an emphasis, the sincerity of which it was quite impossible to doubt, that she entertained a sentiment for myself similar to mine for her.

"I have seen her to-day. Your treatment of her has been so far justified that she has come back in the enjoyment of complete health; but, to my astonishment—indeed it seems hardly credible—she denies all recollection of everything said or done by her at the interview to which I have made allusion. What is the meaning of this? I would stake my life on her integrity. Can it be that her intellect is still to some extent clouded over by her late illness? In the name of common humanity tell me the naked truth. Yes—and tell me this too. The half-sister, Miss Wynn, while she was here, managed to wound her arm. Miss Vivian's arm, as though by a kind of witchcraft, bears the scar of a wound which closely—one would fancy absolutely—corresponds to it. What have you been doing to her? What have you been allowing her to do? I hardly know what to think or what to ask; but you will recognize, as a man of the world, that I have a right to demand the truth, and I positively will have it. When can I see you? We must have it out together, face to face.

"Yours,

"Theophilus Barton."

The following reply from Dr. Thistlewood was brought back by Mr. Barton's messenger:—

"Dear Mr. Barton,

"I agree with you that, since things have happened as they have happened, a response to your questions is no more than your due. To-morrow morning, if this suits your convenience, I will do myself the honour of calling on you, and will then tell you what I can. But I foresee two difficulties. The one is that you will be reluctant to believe the facts. The other is that you will be slow to understand them.

"Yours, with sincere respect,

"Gustav Thistlewood."

BOOK IV

CHAPTER I

Mr. Barton was like a man who, unkilled, has fallen from some Alpine height, and hardly dares to conjecture the extent of his own injuries. The touch of Miss Vivian's lips, and the light which had called to him in her eyes, had changed his nature in ways of which his conscious self knew little. Zeal for the salvation of other human beings now had as the heart of it a hunger for the personal possession of one. This possession of another, this taking of her into himself, no doubt represented for him all the sanctities of a sacrament; but he had, nevertheless, in order to prepare himself for its reception, been obliged to abandon a position hallowed by the temperament of a lifetime, and accustom himself to viewing all sanctities in a new perspective. And now everything for the sake of which he had made this change was gone. He was like a man who has left his old home for some fair mirage in the desert, compared with which no other home is endurable, and who then finds the phantom vanished, with nothing around him but a trackless waste of sand.

Mr. Barton's desert, moreover, resembled the deserts of fable in being not only a desolation, but a desolation haunted with terrors and fantastic whisperings. The results of Miss Vivian's conduct were hardly more desolating to his heart than that conduct itself was astonishing and incomprehensible to his intellect; and the "airy tongues" of this wilderness soon beset him, suggesting successive explanations of sinister and grotesque kinds. Could it, he asked himself, be possible that the being from whom he had lately parted, the being with the scarred arm, was not Miss Vivian at all, but her sister—the incredible sister—gratifying her animosity by playing an impish trick on him? No; for many reasons this theory would not hold water. Still, the scar was there. The scar must have had some origin. How had she been wounded? By whom, and with what object? Had she, while sick and helpless, been made the subject of diabolic experiments? Dr. Thistlewood

had spoken of twins who, after years of separation, had been wounded and scarred simultaneously on the same portion of their bodies. Had Dr. Thistlewood been trying to manufacture a case of the same kind? This man had admitted in his lecture that he used his patients as subjects of hypnotic experiments. Mr. Barton, it is true, as he had told Miss Vivian at the mesmerist's, refused to believe that one human being, by any physical means, could acquire the least control over the moral will of another; but might it not, he now asked himself, be possible that, in some limited way, the fleshly mechanism of life, which the soul used, should be interfered with, and the soul deprived for a time of its means of communicating with its fellows? Solitary confinement made many prisoners mad. Who could say what the art of modern doctors, with all their perverted skill, might not do in the same direction? To none of these explanations could he yield a prolonged assent; but an animosity against Dr. Thistlewood, which sullenly subsided at last into a vague but inexpugnable suspicion, mixed itself with the aching of his heart and the pangs of that famine which one thing alone could satisfy. When he met Dr. Thistlewood face to face, however, then this enigma should resolve itself.

Dr. Thistlewood, who was familiar with most forms of human perturbation, was meanwhile returning to Mr. Barton good for evil. "Poor man," he said to himself when, punctual to his promise, he set out next morning on his walk to Mr. Barton's house, "I hope I need tell him no more than is good for everybody; and that this course may be a complete and a not too painful cure."

Mr. Barton greeted him with an heroic effort at self-possession; but when, having seated himself, he leaned his head on his hand, his gaze was the gaze of one who sees everything round him waver.

"I think," Dr. Thistlewood began, in a voice which was not too solemn, "that I understand the essentials of your position, and can therefore save you the embarrassment and pain of explaining them. Miss Vivian, before her illness, makes you some avowal which distinctly implies that she is willing to become your wife. The moment she gets her health back, you see her, you remind her of the incident, and this curious young lady disclaims all knowledge of what you are talking about. You are also startled by observing a certain scar on her arm. You think perhaps," he added, with a slight smile, "that I have been gratifying my curiosity by subjecting her to some mild process of vivisection. Anyhow, these are your mysteries; and you want me to clear them up."

Mr. Barton nodded, adding faintly the words, "I do."

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, "to clear them up entirely—that would be a big business, full of medical details which would be hardly intelligible to yourself; and I hope it will not be necessary. But

Miss Vivian's startling repudiation of her own past professions, which is after all the one practical question for you—this can be explained without difficulty, unusual as such an incident is. So, for the present, let us stick to that. I shall have to inflict a pain on you, Mr. Barton, for which, I am sure, you are unprepared. On the other hand, there are pains of another kind from which I shall be able to relieve you. Now, my good friend, listen. You, in visiting the sick, must have seen many cases of fever; and people in fever, as you know, exhibit many freaks of forgetfulness."

"Yes," said Mr. Barton, wearily, "that's correct enough. But this is not a case of forgetting. It's one thing to forget that you were thirsty one evening a week ago. It's another thing to have lost the sensation of thirst altogether."

"Wait a bit," said Dr. Thistlewood. "We, as yet, have but half the story. I began with the phenomena of mere forgetfulness so as to put you on the right track—on the track of occurrences which are well known, if not common. Let us now go back from forgetfulness to the thing in this case forgotten. The meeting at which Miss Vivian gave you reason to believe in her affection for you—do you remember that I called on you the morning after it occurred? I had no suspicion at the time of the subjects that were discussed between you. I had no desire to find out. The questions I asked you were of a purely medical kind. 'Did you,' I asked, 'notice in Miss Vivian's demeanour any unusual symptoms?' You did, and you told me what they were. I may tell you now, though I don't think I said so then and there—that they were just what I had foreseen they would be from my knowledge of kindred cases. In the course of the interview Miss Vivian's manner changed. It had been dull and apathetic at first. Then, with a marked abruptness, it became just the reverse. Then, you remember, she asked you one or two questions which you yourself at one time noticed as being rather odd. She spoke of your having come back, as though you'd only just left the house; and she asked you if you'd entered through the conservatory, when no such mode of entrance at Cliff's End was possible. She also made use of a rather curious locution. 'So and so,' she said to you, 'is what Mr. Barton tells us.'"

"Your own memory," said Mr. Barton, with a sort of aimless sarcasm, "shows no signs of failing you. To me these little peculiarities all seemed very natural."

"You admit," Dr. Thistlewood continued, "that fever may cause forgetfulness. You cannot be less familiar with the fact that it may produce delusions. You have, doubtless, seen patients tossing about in their beds, who fancy that a bedroom in London is a verandah in Hongkong. They constantly make mistakes as to the identity of the people round them. A nurse is taken for a mother, a doctor for

a son or husband. Also, hallucinations of this kind—here you have another familiar fact—will develop themselves quite suddenly, and will cease as suddenly as they developed themselves."

"Well," said Mr. Barton, with an air of quickened attention, "I am listening. Pray go on."

"I should like," said Dr. Thistlewood, "to give you an interesting example of this, supplied by the case of a young woman in America, of which some day I may tell you more. A whole book has been written about her by a well-known Boston doctor. The young woman, who had been disordered by a severe nervous shock, exhibited symptoms like those we have just been talking of; and she would sometimes do so with a suddenness by which her doctor himself was bewildered. One day, when her health was seemingly quite restored to her, she called at the hospital, of which he was the distinguished head, to consult him in his own room. When she entered she struck him as being so listless that she had hardly go enough to tell him what was the matter with her. But presently, without any warning, she gave a start as if she saw him there for the first time, and began to talk to him about matters of which he understood nothing. In a minute or two he realized that she was calling him by a name other than his own. When he told her what his own was, she insisted that he was talking nonsense. Not till long afterwards did he discover that, there before his very eyes, her mind—let us put it this way—through some infirmity of the body, had been playing her one of those curious tricks we spoke about. Several years of life had disappeared from her memory. To her the physician now appeared to be a former lover, and she imagined herself to be completing a scene with him which had been interrupted several years ago. I tell you this anecdote, Mr. Barton—have you any idea why?"

"No," said Mr. Barton, doggedly; "you surely don't mean to insinuate——"

"I tell it you," said Dr. Thistlewood, "because the incident I have just described is undoubtedly parallel to that which took place between Miss Vivian and yourself. At a given moment, as you noticed, there was an alteration in her voice and manner. Up to that moment she knew you for what you are. From that moment onwards she took you for some one else. She believed herself to be in some different place, and to be continuing with that other person an incident, or a series of incidents, belonging to a different time."

Mr. Barton's face was pale. At last he managed to stammer, "Impossible! What incidents? And with whom?"

"How can I tell?" said Dr. Thistlewood, avoiding Mr. Barton's eye. "For Miss Vivian the scene, at all events, had no association with yourself. Well, Mr. Barton, this fact, though it very

naturally disappoints you, has yet a consolatory side to it. It entirely does away with any possible supposition on your part that Miss Vivian has been guilty of intentional levity. Further, on your own showing, though she took you for somebody else, and could in consequence have had no intention of flattering you, she spoke of you with very deep regard, and quoted with deep feeling your own words to her imaginary hearer."

Mr. Barton's pallor was at last tempered by a blush. "I am conscious," he said, "of the delicacy with which you touch on these private matters. If facts are, as you say they are, I may perhaps find some consolation in them. But, God help me, Dr. Thistlewood, I feel that you are only playing with me. I feel that there is something in the background to which as yet you have not even alluded. How did she get that scar? Yes, Dr. Thistlewood, how did Miss Vivian, at the time in a state of torpor, and under your own care, or the care of one of your subordinates, come to have her arm mutilated in a manner so closely imitative of the wound received by Miss Wynn —it doesn't matter how—at Southquay? Don't try to put me off by referring to your story of the twins, who both, on the same day, were scratched on the right cheek. I don't want general analogies. I want specific facts. Miss Vivian must have been wounded by something which lacerated her own skin, even if a hundred of her relations had been lacerated in the same way. Have you been hacking her and cutting her about, and unhinging her mind, so as to see if her nervous system resembles that of her sister?"

"Come, come," said Dr. Thistlewood. "I knew, by the way in which you looked at me, that your mind was haunted by some wild idea of that kind. If to watch a patient is to experiment with her, it is perfectly true that I have used Miss Vivian as a subject; but the experiments have been practised by the young lady on herself. You may possibly compel me, if you are obstinate, to tell you everything some day; but for your sake, and for hers, I would much rather refrain, and in no case could I tell you now. The matter is much too complicated. Look here, Mr. Barton—if I did tell you everything that I know, I can assure you most solemnly of this, that your own position, so far as your present hopes are concerned, would be no more satisfactory than they are now in the light of what I have told you already. If Miss Vivian has seemed to give you any encouragement as a lover, as a suitor for her hand, she did this not knowing what she was doing. You have deceived yourself; or rather, circumstances have deceived you—which comes to the same thing. As a friend, I advise you to set your whole project aside. Be a man, and pocket your disappointment, as many other men have done before you. As it is, Miss Vivian respects you—respects you very deeply. Do not forfeit her respect in attempting to gain her

love, your only hopes of which are built, as she has shown you, on a mistake."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Barton, rousing himself; "but I venture to think that I am a better judge than you of the kind of relations existing between Miss Vivian and myself. My own feelings, my own hopes in the matter, have not originated in the professions of regard which she made me on an occasion when I am willing to believe that her senses, as you say, were deceiving her. They have an origin independent of those particular professions altogether. No, sir. In a case like this I shall take no advice but my own. At the same time I tender you my sincere thanks for having put certain facts, however unwelcome, before me. Indeed, Dr. Thistlewood, after all, unwelcome is the wrong word for them. You have relieved more pain than you have caused. You have cut away certain sprouts of premature expectations; but you have left the stalk and the roots in a healthier condition than before."

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, "before you either hope or despair, I would, if I were you, take a little more time to think. When you left the young lady the other day, I should judge that you were in a state of agitation which must have prevented your forming any very sound opinion about her. See her again. Observe her in the company of other people. Lord Cotswold has asked Sir Rawlin and the Cliff's End party to dinner to-night, by way of celebrating Miss Vivian's convalescence; and he has commissioned me to say that he hopes you will come too. Come, my dear fellow, come. It will do you all the good in the world."

Pleased with this unexpected suggestion, Mr. Barton assented. His mind still, when the thought of the scar recurred to him, was vaguely troubled by some dark and inexplicable fear; but on the whole, in what Dr. Thistlewood told him, there was ample ground for hope. Though the original temple which he had reared so high was in ruins, he would build it anew, and on more secure foundations.

CHAPTER II

WHILST this interview had been taking place in the dimness of Mr. Barton's library, Miss Vivian, her gaily coloured parasol shining in the sunlit air, had gone for a walk with Miss Arundel along the heights of the New Drive. Her mood was meditative, but she showed no sign of depression. Indeed, the turquoise-coloured sea below, breaking amongst the hidden boulders with its drowsy eternal murmur, and the budding sprays that lifted themselves from the green of the subjacent gardens, had a visible counterpart in eyes—eyes alight with that buoyant trouble of expectation which is the soul alike of youth, religion, and romance.

The two ladies were proceeding at a pleasingly slow pace, when a carriage, just a little less slow, overtook and pulled up beside them. Its occupant was old Mrs. Summerfield, whose voice issuing from the depths of her poke bonnet, was saying, "You must forgive my blindness. But surely this is Miss Arundel."

Miss Arundel admitted her identity. "And here," she said, "is my cousin Nest."

"Oh," said Mrs. Summerfield, "that's pretty Miss Nest, is it? How are you, my dear? I'm glad they have got you back again. Nina, you good soul, you're the very person I want. You must help me about something which I have to do in the town."

Hereupon there ensued a long conversation with regard to stockings and petticoats for some old women in alms-houses. With regard to these articles of attire Miss Arundel was evidently an expert; and presently she was in the act of saying, "Oh no, Mrs. Summerfield. If you give one and ninepence three-farthings you can get them of excellent quality," when an exclamation from the lips of Miss Vivian interrupted her. "Nina," said Miss Vivian, "look! Here comes Sir Rawlin Stantor."

Sir Rawlin's thoughts of Miss Vivian had, during her prolonged absence, grown, for several reasons, insensibly less frequent. One of these reasons had been the awakening of prudence and principle, due to his narrow escape from the logical consequences of his folly. Another had been the growing pressure and excitement of his work

in Southquay as the day of the poll approached. Another had been the welcome he had met with from his party and its chiefs at Westminster, and the transforming stimulus administered to him by a renewed contact with affairs. Now, indeed, when victory had brought its hush with it, and he returned, as he had done last night, to the scene of his late adventures, old interests showed signs of reviving; and his thoughts began to flutter again, although at a cautious distance, round the heroine of the hockey-field, the shepherdess of the poppy-coloured cap. But they floated rather round the beautiful, precocious girl, than round the premature woman whose heart he had felt beating against his own. He had realized his immeasurable distance from her in that moment when she had seemed most near to him. His recent restoration to active, practical life, and the mood of mind demanded by it, had restored to him his vivid memories of what women had already been to him. To one woman he had, with a faith so single-hearted that he now could only wonder at it as a something divine or ludicrous, committed himself and all that his being held, as though she were a ship that would carry him to the shores of heaven. The ship had gone to pieces. He had got back his own goods; but the gloss had gone from them, and they were salt with the brine of knowledge. He could never set forth upon such a voyage again; and the recovered wisdom with which he now found himself fortified, he had reduced, in a letter to Lord Cotswold, to the following impersonal reflections: "The imaginative and exclusive attraction which any one woman has for a man decreases in proportion to his experience of women and of life generally. It depends on a belief in the individual woman as a vessel of mystical possibilities, and of all sorts of guiding clairvoyances, which are practically not possessed by her. If men of experience are attracted by feminine youth, they are attracted by it because it creates a lost mystery over again for them; for precocious girlhood, by reason of its divine credulities, is just as inaccessible to the mature man who knows much, as developed womanhood is to the young man who knows little. Youth may excite in maturity everything of love but the reality of it. If maturity is to love youth, it must first rebelieve what youth believes."

Such being the condition of Sir Rawlin's mind, so far as Miss Vivian—the image of youth for him—was concerned, he had certainly not come out either hoping or expecting to see her. But the moment he did so, he was reconciled to the morning's accident. Indeed, his pulses stirred in a manner for which he was not at all prepared, though a faint apprehension at the same time invaded him as to whether some memory of the great night of the thunderstorm might not unseasonably have strayed back into her consciousness.

"Sir Rawlin," said Mrs. Summerfield, "I'm not able to distinguish you; but give me your hand, and allow me to congratulate you on your victory. Come if you can and see me one night at dinner. I can offer you some very old port; and I'll ask that young lady to meet you, who, they tell me, is a great favourite of yours. And now I'm going to carry this dear Nina Arundel off, to choose some stockings for me in the town. Get in, Nina. And you, Miss Nest—are you there still?—I've no doubt our new member will look after you, and be gallant enough to take you safe back to your aunt."

The eyes of the young shepherdess, her smile, and the clear freshness of her complexion, relieved Sir Rawlin of the last vestige of uneasiness. There was no reproachful hint in them of any unpaid debt. He could start his intimacy afresh with her, and exclude from it all danger.

"I can't tell you," he began, with a sense that he might be safely cordial, "how glad I am to see you again. Let me examine the invalid. Why, she's looking better than ever. We'd all of us have a rest-cure, could we hope for the same results from it. And there are her violets; and she's got on the same red cap which was tipped over her left eyebrow when I saw her first in the mist."

"I'll tell you what," said Miss Vivian. "If you examine me with such a critical eye, these people who are coming along will think that my things don't fit me. Come down into the gardens. We'll find a bench with a view there. I'm quite well again, thank you, but I haven't quite got my strength back."

A seat was found, and Sir Rawlin, with a renewed interest in her, and also with a renewed caution, took his place at her side. Thoughts, as he did so, came back to him of the one woman who had many years ago fused, despite all obstacles, his spirit and his flesh together, and associated all his aspirations with his longing for her lips and eyes. No such self-surrender—he knew it—was now possible for him. Between himself and his present companion, however close he might be to her, he mentally placed this fact as though it were a drawn sword.

They looked at the sea. They spoke in appropriate terms of its beauty. The subject was an unexceptionable one, but it could not last for ever. Sir Rawlin felt himself wondering what was to take its place. When the time came, instinct guided him.

"I shall never forget," he said, pitching his tone carefully, "how frightened I was on your account when the storm broke over the Castle. I was quite prepared to catch you up like a child, and carry you away from it to the other end of the world."

Here was a speech which met all the demands of the situation. It did not repudiate any fragments of the past that might be

remembered by her, but it subtly withdrew from them all inconvenient meaning.

"Dr. Thistlewood told me," she said, "about the lightning, and how close we were to it; but to me it all is a blank. Anyhow, it's a comfort to know that I made no foolish scene."

"You weren't nearly so pale," he said, "as you were that day on the hill, when the thunder did nothing but give the ghost of a rumble, and Miss Hazel and Miss Elvira O'Brian were afraid you were going to tumble down."

"I should have," replied the girl, looking up at him through her long eyelashes, "if you hadn't let me catch hold of you. You must have thought I was very forward, but everything seemed *convenable* in such a mist. Whatever else I've forgotten, I haven't forgotten about that."

"And have you forgotten," said Sir Rawlin, "my first introduction to Mr. Hugo, and to James, and to Peter's altar, and to Mrs. Morriston Campbell?"

"Poor Peter," said Miss Vivian. "Mr. Hugo, when I was ill, gave him an electric shock, and he's never been the same since. Mr. Hugo now says that, if he'd only the right sort of battery, he could, by giving shocks to people, change their entire characters. It's a pity he doesn't change his own. He still thinks a man or a beetle is going to appear in his glue-pot."

The conversation, from this point onwards, found a course along which it could flow and sparkle, neither stagnating in pools too deep and too full of reflections, nor losing its intimate character in the shallows of the merely commonplace; and at last, when Miss Vivian declared that it was time to go, and that the shortest way to Cliff's End would be down through the gardens into the valley, their exchange of intimate trivialities held them so close together that the presence or absence of any closer bond was indistinguishable. When, however, they had reached the lodge at the entrance of the Cliff's End drive, she turned and confronted him with a smile which had something half-possessive in its seriousness.

"Well," she said, "are you going to come in and lunch with us?"

Sir Rawlin's prudence was instantly up in arms. "I can't," he said, "much as I should like to. But, my dear, I was forgetting. I am going to meet you to-night, at the dinner which Lord Cotswold is giving in special honour of your recovery. Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye. I'm delighted to see you so well again. What are you going to wear to-night? No, don't tell me. You shall surprise me at eight o'clock."

As Miss Vivian ascended the drive, her thoughts of the late conversation were busy with what she had failed to find in it, not

with what she had found. She had not found that which, despite all gaps in her memory, seemed to have been drawing so near to her when she was sketching under the Scotch firs, when she had first seen the Turkish Castle, when she had sunk so close to him into a dream in the winter-garden, with the silver of the midnight sea leaving its witchery in her heart. He was near her still; but somehow he was far away. Those grey eyes of her friend, however they might seek her own eyes, were grave with some inward vision of which she formed no part.

CHAPTER III

By the time it was necessary for him to start for the Turkish Castle, Mr. Barton had pulled himself together; and, when he entered Lord Cotswold's drawing-room, he was rigid with self-possession. A new anxiety, of a comparatively trivial kind, had indeed helped to sober him, as such anxieties often do. What, he had begun to ask himself, would Miss Vivian think of him, in view of his own behaviour on the occasion of their last meeting? Would it, in vulgar language, have struck her that he had made a fool of himself? She should, at all events, have no reason for forming such an opinion now.

So far as this matter went, he was presently set at ease. As soon as he had been welcomed by his host, Miss Vivian and Lady Susannah both came up to him with smiles of such cheerful frankness, as to show him that in their eyes he had done nothing unusual. How was he? they asked in tones that all the room might hear. Much better, they hoped; and, full of elegant sympathy, Mr. Carlton approached, and added his hopes to theirs. Mr. Barton heard himself declaring that his malady had been a passing trifle; and Miss Vivian confided to him, by a private little glance of her own, her pleasure in finding that a pain, which she knew to have been acute, was over.

The irony of the girl's unconsciousness of her own share in his trouble was inflicting on him a new pang, when, before he had time to dwell on it, the accents of his host distracted him.

"I haven't seen you," said Lord Cotswold, "since the night of my evening party, though I've heard of you from Dr. Gustav; and I have always been wanting to express to you the interest I felt in your very remarkable sermon, and in the hymn which followed it—I presume by the same author. It seemed to me that you gave us the whole Christian philosophy." And, drawing Mr. Barton aside, he repeated in a low, rich tone—

"'Lord, when place and space
Are not, and the skies
Hold no worlds, and eyes
Cease to obscure Thy face.'

I remember it all——" he went on; but the butler's voice announcing dinner interrupted him.

At dinner the conversation was of an ordinary and cheerful kind. Lord Cotswold and Lady Susannah developed an unexpected friendliness by getting on the topic of some mutual, though not very near relations, and Mr. Carlton annotated this pleasant discourse by sundry anecdotes illustrative of the private absurdities of the great. Mr. Barton, his silence observed by Dr. Thistlewood only, sat seemingly in a kind of dream; but his eyes, within certain limits, were closely, though cautiously, vigilant. Their scrutiny was confined to Miss Vivian, and those to whom she spoke, or who spoke to her. The girl, though not noticeably wanting in any of her accustomed vivacity had, so it seemed to him, developed some new composure, as though all the world were familiar to her, and she were meeting it on equal terms. He was specially struck by the aplomb with which she suppressed a sally of Mr. Hugo's. Mr. Hugo who, feeling himself under Dr. Thistlewood's scientific protection, judged that the occasion was favourable to some oblique annoyance of Mr. Barton, contrived to publish the intelligence in a voice sufficiently audible, that he had just finished making a kaleidoscope designed to show by analogy how the brain could be shaken up into different patterns of character. To Mr. Barton, in his present mood, such nonsense was itself indifferent; but he felt, to the bottom of his heart, the implication of the girl's tone, when he realized that she was appealing to himself, and saying, "You must shut this boy, with his horrid, dirty hands, up. But no—I won't trouble you. I can see you have your headache still."

Once more the irony of her equable friendliness wounded him. The lips which were now so friendly, had once pressed themselves to his own. He made no answer. He could hardly smile in return. He had to withdraw his eyes from her, even before she had withdrawn her own.

When he looked again, she was in communication with Sir Rawlin Stantor. They were leaning a little towards each other, across the segment of the round table that divided them. Sir Rawlin's face and manner were instinct with a different intimacy; but Mr. Barton himself divined that there was in them a certain distance. He divined also that Miss Vivian was aware of the fact and sensitive to it. Similar incidents occurred from time to time; and after each, the girl was subdued and silent. At length Mr. Barton remarked that a change came over her. The glances cast by her in Sir Rawlin's direction ceased. She talked with a feverish eagerness to Mr. Carlton, who sat beside her, and presently began to exhibit to him the beauties of her painted fan. Then came the voice of Sir Rawlin, still remote though friendly, begging that he too

might be allowed the privilege of inspecting it. Miss Vivian passed it over to him with an extended hand and arm. The arm was gloved to the elbow. The white gleam of the kid arrested Mr. Barton's eye. The glove on that arm, it occurred to him, had not been taken off at all. He thought of the scar hidden by it, and he pushed his plate away from him. Miss Vivian meanwhile had resumed her conversation with Mr. Carlton, and was drawing the other glove on with unnecessary and ostentatious care.

"By the way, my young friend," said Lord Cotswold to Mr. Hugo, when the ladies had left the room, a promise having been given to them that they would not be long left alone, "what was that I heard you saying about a kaleidoscope? Mr. Barton, come here and sit by me. These sprigs of the rising generation are determined to go beyond both of us."

"I should rather," said Mr. Barton, with an acerbity which he could not control, "say that the thought of to-day was going back to the earliest beginnings of thought, and that persons like our very young friend there were its very appropriate mouthpieces. I dare say our young friend has never read Lucretius, or even heard what Lucretius said about the human mind.

> "Principio esse aio persubtilem atque minutis
> Corporibus factum constare.'

That means, Mr. Hugo Arundel, that according to the modern science of ancient Rome, the soul is a heap of independent little bits of dust, some of them shaped like hooks, some of them shaped like eyes, which collide by accident and form into a kind of cluster, and that, as soon as this dust-heap is formed, it begins to talk and think, just as if the dust in a dust-cart were to begin to drive the horse. That's what Lucretius said two thousand years before modern science was thought of, and modern science is saying no more than he did."

Mr. Hugo's youth, thus attacked by mature scholarship, enlisted general sympathy in his favour, and Lord Cotswold was considering how best to come to his rescue, when Mr. Hugo, recovering from a moment's bashfulness, fought his own battle with a weapon for which Mr. Barton was not prepared.

"If Lucretius," he replied with a smile of elaborate calmness, "really said all that in seven or eight words, he certainly did what nobody could do to-day."

Not all the consideration and courtesy due to Mr. Barton and his position could prevent the explosion of a certain amount of laughter, Oswald's eyes being filled with generous tears of appreciation.

"Come," said Lord Cotswold, his own eyes still smiling, as he laid a confidential hand on Mr. Barton's adjacent shoulder, "you won't be in a hurry to leave us. We'll have our talk by-and-by,

when our ladies and these young men have gone. And now I suggest that we have our coffee in the drawing-room. Mr. Barton, we smoke everywhere."

Mr. Barton was no sooner in the drawing-room than he found himself being asked to play. The request was twice repeated before he seemed to take in its nature.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I would have played with the greatest pleasure. I'm afraid, however, I must confess to a slight nervous headache."

"Then don't try," said Lord Cotswold. "The young people shall amuse themselves. Let them try some game. Can you think of a game, any of you?"

Mr. Carlton who, when youth was present, always felt himself younger than anybody, immediately began to propose one well-known game after another, and as though to avenge Mr. Barton for the affront that had lately been put upon him, proceeded to make a butt of the unfortunate Mr. Hugo.

"Let Hugo," he said, "go out of the room, and then come back and impersonate some celebrated woman of history—Semiramis, or anybody he likes; and we, from his acting, have to find out who she is."

"Yes," exclaimed Miss Vivian, who appeared to have recovered her spirits, "let Mr. Hugo act Semiramis. If we can't recognize her, you, Mr. Hugo, win. At this game you'll win to a certainty, so you needn't be afraid to try."

Mr. Hugo remained mute, a monument of annoyed obstructiveness; and Mr. Carlton, having indulged in a variety of other suggestions, at last hit on *Bouts rimès*—a pastime which, when he had explained its nature, was received with sufficient approbation.

"Somebody," he said, "gives two words or more—for the likes of us two will be quite enough. Each word must be the end of a line of poetry, and two other lines must be added which will make sense, and will rhyme to them. Shall I give you an example? You must all have pieces of paper. Ah, Dr. Thistlewood, how good of you! And I see you've got pencils too. Well, here are two words—Lace and Dressed. See what you can make of those. Now, you've only got five minutes."

A silence followed, broken by the sound of pencils; but nobody, when the time was up, had produced a presentable poem with the exception of Mr. Carlton himself. Mr. Carlton's poem was this, which he recited with a glance at Miss Vivian—

"Who has the best lace?
The best-dressed girl, with the prettiest face.
Who is the prettiest and best-dressed?
A young lady in crêpe de chine, called Nest."

"Capital!" said a chorus of voices.

"A poor thing, but mine own," said Mr. Carlton, modestly. "Now, two more words. Who'll give the words this time?"

Various words were now set in succession, but the poems into which they were woven were not very remarkable.

"What's Hugo about all this while?" exclaimed Miss Vivian, rising. "He hasn't given us a verse. Let me see, Hugo, what you've been up to."

The very mention of Mr. Hugo's name had the pleasant effect of producing a general smile. Even Mr. Barton slightly curled his lips, and observed—

"It's a pity that so much talent should be wasted."

"Look here," said Miss Vivian, "Hugo hasn't written a word. Here's merely a paper scribbled over with lines."

"I was merely trying," said Mr. Hugo, with nonchalance, "to work out a little problem in Euclid. Do you want two words? I dare say I can give them to you."

"Yes," said Miss Arundel, "let Hugo give the words, if he can't manage the verses."

"Perhaps," replied Mr. Hugo, loftily, "I might be able to do both, if they were about anything sensible. Here's a word, then—Square. Oh, you want another. Is that it? Well, then—Angles."

"That's difficult," said Lord Cotswold. "What can anybody make of that?"

"Nest," said Mr. Carlton, "I've thought of something. Come over and sit by me, and we'll do it together."

Mr. Barton watched her movements. Her demeanour, inexplicably changed, had now begun to sting him. She sank with her fan and laces close to Mr. Carlton's side; her face, alive with smiles, seemed almost to be resting on his shoulder, and bursts of laughter escaped from her, as the work of composition proceeded.

"Now, Cousin George, time's up," said Oswald.

"We've nearly finished," said Mr. Carlton. "You read yours out first."

"Very well," replied the diplomat. "Mine has the merit of brevity.

"If a poet would square
His loves with his morals,
Let the poet beware,
Or good-bye to his laurels."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Mr. Carlton, "you're not rhymed to angle at all. Now listen," he continued, as Oswald was obliged to confess his error. "Nest and I can do better than that, though we're neither of us professed poets.

"A young lady, whose dress was cut square,
Wore a lovely assortment of bangles.
She'd a little aigrette in her hair,
And her bodice and sleeves were all spangles.
But the sleeves of the gown
Got detached, and fell down,
And showed that her elbows were angles.
Whereupon she exclaimed,
'Let the laundress be blamed,
All the buttons are broke by the mangles.'"

A burst of applause followed. The proceedings were at last growing animated. Lord Cotswold clapped his hands.

"I ought to tell you," said Mr. Carlton, "that the bit about the elbows was Nest's. I think that, at any rate, between us we've exhausted the rhymes to angle."

"Not quite," said Mr. Hugo, solemnly looking up from his paper. "My poem is this—

"Let nobody with my conclusion wrangle.
Suppose a figure has four equal sides,
And one rectangle. Every angle, if tried,
Will be found equal to every other angle."

Mr. Hugo's effort, especially the scansion of his last line, filled the room with merriment. It was furthermore pointed out to him that he was just as bad as Oswald. Oswald had left out Angle, Mr. Hugo had left out Square.

"Come," said Mr. Carlton, "think of another word. We may as well stick to Square, but we don't want any more Angles."

Mr. Hugo responded by emitting the monosyllable "Side."

"Very well, then, Side," said Mr. Carlton. "Now—Side, Square. You must all of you bring in both."

Lady Susannah cast a glance at the clock. "This," she said, "must really be the last. Nest oughtn't to be kept up much longer. Poor child," she whispered to Mr. Barton, "for all her smiles and laughing, she looks tired out of her very life."

Mr. Barton watched, but he could not trust himself to speak. "What, Rawlin," said Lord Cotswold, "are you entering the lists too? Let me see what it is you've written."

He read, nodded, and despite a gesture on Sir Rawlin's part, passed the paper to Dr. Thistlewood. With the exception of Mr. Carlton, nobody else appeared to have made much progress. Oswald declared that his inspiration had failed him. Mr. Hugo could get no farther than the somewhat irregular couplet—

"If a person should take the square
Of the hypothenuse, or a triangle's third side——"

"Well, then," said Mr. Carlton, "you'll have to fall back on mine. It's called 'When the cat's away' by a Heroine below Stairs.

"When I rides from Belgrave Square
In my lady's coach and pair,
With the butler by my side,
Don't my sunshade blush with pride!"

While the applause, somewhat perfunctory, elicited by this was subsiding, Mr. Barton heard his name being uttered by Miss Vivian.

"Get Dr. Thistlewood," she was saying to him, "to read out Sir Rawlin's."

Before the author could enter any effectual protest, Dr. Thistlewood had complied.

"Here's something," he said, "in another style." And his voice, as he read, had a musical and grave note in it, which slightly annoyed the author, and surprised the rest of the audience.

"Where the city lies foursquare,
Where the Spirit and the Bride
Call us to the taintless tide—
Oh, my fairest of the fair,
We have drunk our cups beside
Other streams than these, and we shall not be there."

It seemed to Mr. Barton, as he listened, that a sudden revelation had been made to him of another man's inner history—the history of a heart long dead. These lines, ostensibly a trifle, though too serious for the occasion, had, he felt, been written in blood. Meanwhile he was watching Miss Vivian, and he knew that she felt this too. Her eyes too had been opened. They were fixed on Sir Rawlin, who himself had become engaged with a newspaper, and for a second a tear shone in them. They were eyes, thought Mr. Barton, surprised by his own insight, which were "wild with all farewells."

CHAPTER IV

"MR. BARTON," said Lord Cotswold, when the guests from Cliff's End had gone, "the night is still young. We might now resume what we were saying about our friend Lucretius. If your headache has not disappeared, you've a first-rate doctor at your elbow, who, I hope, will prescribe philosophic discourse as a remedy."

"Allow me to examine him," said Dr. Thistlewood, genially. "Let me have five minutes with him alone. It's a mild moonlight night. Let us, Mr. Barton, go out on the terrace. We can get our hats and coats in the hall. A breath of fresh air will be good for you."

Mr. Barton bowed and obeyed. They gained the gravel walk which ran between the castle and the sea. The wind blew faintly from the waves over the battlements and the clumps of rosemary. Mr. Barton lifted his hat, so as to catch the coolness on his forehead.

"Well," began Dr. Thistlewood, "what I want to ask you is this. After what you have seen to-night, do you or do you not wish me to go on with my explanations? Before you answer me, I must beg you to remember one thing. There is only one ground on which I recognize your right to question me as to the present matter at all. I refer to the fact that you regard yourself as Miss Vivian's possible husband. She gave you, I admit, an excuse for so regarding yourself. Since then she has shown you that this excuse was altogether illusory. She has, as I shrewdly suspect, shown you something more to-night. Such being the case, then, is it still your intention to secure, if you can, that affection which she has not yet bestowed on you, and which she has bestowed—to speak plainly—on a certain other person?"

"My intentions," said Mr. Barton, "are precisely the same as they ever were. I won't pretend to misunderstand you. Those lines of Sir Rawlin Stantor's, though he no doubt scribbled them off in a mood of cynical idleness—well, they lit up for me, like a match struck in the darkness, an impression which I had formed already though I did not consciously understand it. He is a man whose heart is buried in the past, or worn out by the past—whether

sinfully or otherwise it is not for me to say. If any woman were to love him, she might as well love a figure in a dream. Do you expect me, Dr. Thistlewood, to accept that as a reason for concluding that no other man will ever give her reality?"

"On the contrary," replied Dr. Thistlewood, "though I can do no more than conjecture, my opinion is that, if you tried long enough, you might succeed."

"Oh!" said Mr. Barton, "so you are of that opinion too! Well," he went on impatiently, "what more do you want? This morning you seemed to be bent on explaining all difficulties away. Why do you now insist on them? One would think that you had some interest in parting us."

"Yes," said Dr. Thistlewood, dryly. "Since you put the matter bluntly, I have."

Mr. Barton started. "I was right, then," he exclaimed. "I was right from the very first. And may I ask your reasons? Were you or her parents afraid of her falling under a priest's influence? That's why she was snatched away from me, was it? Or you and her friends, perhaps, have some other and more ambitious union in view for her; or you think she would be a brilliant ornament to the house of some rich nephew of your own."

"If," said Dr. Thistlewood, "I had a son or a nephew of my own, there is no woman in the world, no matter how depraved, to whom I would not sooner see him married than I would to Miss Nest Vivian."

Mr. Barton stopped short in his walk, and turned on Dr. Thistlewood, speechless. At last he managed to articulate—

"You must account to me, sir, for those monstrous words."

Dr. Thistlewood met the priest's angry and astonished eyes with a something like pity in his own.

"My dear good friend," he said, "I believe I shall have to do so. As a man, I would rather not. As a man of science, nothing would interest me more than to see how you take my news. To-morrow, if you insist on it, this experiment shall be made."

"No, sir," said Mr. Barton, "not to-morrow, but instantly. You have dared to slander—to slander with the vilest insinuations—— Dr. Thistlewood, I do not leave this spot till I have made you explain everything."

"Your tone at this moment," Dr. Thistlewood answered quietly, "shows me how difficult the task of explanation will be. Be patient, and do not waste your anger. But stay. Now I come to think of it, I can give you, even to-night—not, indeed, the explanation you ask for, but something that may serve as a preface to it. What I have to tell you about Miss Vivian is something she does not know herself."

Mr. Barton drew a deep breath of relief.

"Come," Dr. Thistlewood continued, "let us go back to Lord Cotswold. I must, for ten minutes or so, attend to one of the servants here—a woman called Sarah Davies, whom I sometimes send to sleep by hypnosis. You and our host meanwhile can beguile the time with Lucretius. You are not in a mood for philosophy, but still, if I know Lord Cotswold, what he says to-night may have a bearing on what I shall have to say to-morrow."

The spectacle of Sir Rawlin still absorbed in a newspaper, which he civilly put down when the two absentees re-entered, helped to restore Mr. Barton to a semblance of normal calm, and when Lord Cotswold, with evident pleasure in his eyes, proposed to renew the discussion which Mr. Hugo had prematurely closed, Mr. Barton felt it would be a relief to listen, if not to argue.

"You were quite right," said Lord Cotswold, "though the boy could, of course, not know it, in what you said of the Lucretian view of matter, and the poet's leap from matter, as understood by himself, to life. But, if I may venture to say so, you are quite wrong as to this—the conception of matter which is forced on us by the discoveries of modern science, when these discoveries are rationalized by the logic of modern philosophy. With respect to the conception of what matter is, and what we know about it, the Scholastics are Lucretians, only they jump from matter to movement, and the movements of life especially—and there they have the advantage of Lucretius—by the aid of a perpetual miracle. You have studied Thomas Aquinas, but have you ever studied Kant? If you had, you would realize that matter, for the modern thinker, is not, as it seems to you, a collection of boy's marbles, which only move when a mind, apart from themselves, plays with them. They are symbols of the mind universal. They are the gleaming on the fringes of its garment. Between matter and mind—Mr. Barton, I am not dictating to you—I am merely trying to express to you the ideas of the modern thinker—between matter and mind the antique opposition disappears. In the thought of Kant they become one for the thinker. They become one for the Physicist in your brain and in mine. Thinkers of your school, Mr. Barton, think and speak of the brain merely as it appears to their eyes—generally to their eyes unassisted by so much as a microscope. Could they only see it as it is by some gift of the double vision, that grey pulp which disgusts them when it oozes from a broken skull, would be a flame that burnt and quivered with all the colours of the rainbow, with the emerald of all leaves growing, with the jasper of the celestial city, with the blue of the sapphire pavement that was under the throne of God. Forgive me for my seeming dogmatism. I am merely throwing down the glove to you. Some other day or night, I hope, it may interest you to take up the challenge."

Dr. Thistlewood, who had been out of the room during most of Lord Cotswold's allocution, had returned in time for the end of it, and was now in the doorway, listening.

"I want," he said, "to show Mr. Barton something which, when that day or night comes, he may possibly find of use to him. Will you, Mr. Barton, come with me into the big room which you once honoured with your presence when some moving photographs were exhibited there. I am going," he continued, as Mr. Barton followed him, "to show you something which bears on your conception of the brain and the transcendental self. The indivisible self uses the divisible organism as its tool — such is your own argument; but the tool, though it may sometimes fail to obey the master's orders, is incompetent, being itself lifeless, to dictate orders to the master. I am not going to weary you to-night with any philosophy of my own. I am only going to show you a simple, though not a very common experiment. In there, in the big room —let me tell you this before I open the door—we shall find the woman who has asked me to secure her a good night's rest. I have often done this by hypnotism—a process to which she is very susceptible. Hypnotized subjects pass through different phases, of which the first two are called technically the lethargic and the cataleptic. We shall find Sarah Davies in the second. You watch what happens. That will teach you more than any learned words of mine."

Dr. Thistlewood opened the door, and at the end of the room within, which was now brilliantly lighted, Sarah Davies, with Dr. Thistlewood's servant near her, was seated like a thing of wax. Dr. Thistlewood, as he and Mr. Barton approached her, took from a shelf a small box containing crochet-work. This box he placed in the woman's hands.

"Sarah," he said, "I should like to watch your stitches."

The woman made no answer, but at once began to ply her needles, in the use of which she exhibited great dexterity.

Dr. Thistlewood allowed her to proceed for a little while uninterrupted. Then, turning to Mr. Barton, as though to secure his attention—

"Now," he said, "watch what happens."

Laying a finger on the woman's left eyelid, he drew it downwards over the eye, in which position it remained. The moment this was done, her right hand fell on her lap, as though it were a lifeless model, carrying the crochet with it, but the left hand, though now not accomplishing anything, still continued in the air the pantomime of its previous work.

"Well," said Mr. Barton, with a sigh of impatient weariness, "and what does that prove?"

"We all," replied Dr. Thistlewood, "know that we have two eyes. It is well, though not so generally known, that we have two brains also. The left brain works the right hand, the right brain works the left. There is the same crosswise connection between the brain and the two eyes. If the right eyelid is closed, the left brain becomes lethargic, and the whole right side is paralyzed. If we lower the left eyelid, it's the other way about."

"Well," said Mr. Barton, doggedly, "that fact, if genuine, is curious. But what then? If you shoot one horse of a pair, the coachman must get on with the other. But the coachman himself is unaltered. You can easily apply my parable to your two brains, or your twenty brains, if you like it better, and the self."

"I told you," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that I wasn't going to argue to-night. I'm just going to show you one experiment more. Francesco—yes, yes, now she will do nicely—come a little closer to her, and speak into that ear. Tell her her brother's drowned. Mr. Barton, watch her face."

"Sarah," said Francesco into her left ear, "your brother was drowned last evening."

"Sarah," said Dr. Thistlewood into her right ear, "your brother has arrived at Plymouth."

The result was singular. One half of the woman's face was distorted with sudden anguish, the other half smiled with joy, and the eye lit up and sparkled. It seemed as though two half faces, belonging to two different people, had been stuck together with glue, in order to produce one.

"Thank you, Francesco," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that's all for the present. Now we'll send her to bed, and order her a good night's rest. Mr. Barton," he continued, when the woman had left the room, "once more let me tell you that I'm not going to moralize this evening. I will only say one word of comment on what you have just witnessed. An operator, by performing the purely physical act of raising or lowering the eyelids of another human being, is able, through the connection of the eyelids with various parts of the organism, to divide that being's indivisible self into two. You admit that such facts are curious. 'Curious' was your own word. You mean by that, that you had never thought about them, or even known of their existence before. Well, all I ask of you is that you think them over between now and to-morrow morning, and then, since you are determined to extract it from me, I will go to the very root of my meaning in what I said about Miss Vivian's character. I must ask you to come here. I shall have to use certain appliances which unluckily are not portable."

CHAPTER V

Mr. Barton's belated discovery of the nature of Miss Vivian's feelings, coupled as it was with his discovery that Sir Rawlin made no response to them, had not inflicted on him any new dismay. On the contrary, it had afforded him a sort of solemn encouragement. It had also lightened his heart by suggesting reasonable explanations of the facts which Dr. Thistlewood that morning had left involved in mystery. If matters had ended here, Mr. Barton that night might have possibly slept in peace, the strange scar and its origin being for the time forgotten. But the latter part of the evening had undone the work of the first. Why had that woman with her crochet-work been brought in to mop and mow at him? Even the sound of Lord Cotswold's voice, as it talked about the double vision, and the brain-cells with their jewelled fire, made in his ears an echoing which was vaguely sinister. These things, however, were trifles. They might well have passed out of his mind if it had not been for Dr. Thistlewood's statement, made by him with such a ghastly emphasis, that the most depraved of women was fitter to be an honest man's wife than Miss Vivian. All that night his sleep was a conflict with distorted dreams. Now he saw eyelids being torn from living faces; now, arms being wounded for some diabolic purpose, whilst the operators smiled and watched. Now he saw brains in bottles, burning like unhallowed lamps, and filling dissecting-rooms with gleams of blue and carmine. Now he saw girls with prayer shining in their eyes, whilst allurement lurked in their laughter as they lounged on sofas, and hid their lips behind fans, or fragments of foolscap paper.

The following morning when he entered Dr. Thistlewood's large, bare room, he felt like a man about to submit to an operation. The very aspect of the place had something in it harsh and formidable. There were signs of preparation, he could not tell for what; and Dr. Thistlewood himself was busy in arranging a series of objects, which lay in a row on a long, narrow deal table.

His manner when he greeted Mr. Barton was not indeed unfriendly; but it seemed to put friendship aside, as though it were for the moment an irrelevancy.

"If you look about you," he said, slightly smiling, "you will realize why it was necessary for you to come to me in my own quarters. Do you see that big white sheet drawn across the end of the room? Do you see that big gramophone, and the other machine standing near it? Do you see those things on the table—a row of portraits, framed together in twos? Do you see that by each pair there is something of the nature of a memorandum? I shall have to make use of all these appliances, in order to give you the answer which you still are bent on forcing from me. Come, let us make a beginning. Our concern being with Miss Vivian—the young lady whom you desire to marry—we'll start our proceedings with something very closely connected with her, though after that it will be necessary for us to make digressions. In the gramophone at this moment is the record of a very interesting speech. You shall hear a word or two now. By-and-by we will have the whole of it."

Dr. Thistlewood, as he spoke, set the instrument in motion, and out of its trumpet-shaped throat issued Miss Vivian's voice, with every nuance of articulation perfect. "What shall I say?" it asked. "Shall I repeat some passage out of a book?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Barton, under his breath.

"For the moment," said Dr. Thistlewood, "we'll put that record by, and you shall hear a word or two from another. Now, Mr. Barton, do you recognize this?"

The instrument spoke again, and with equal fidelity to life the following words saluted Mr. Barton's ears: "Come, Dr. Thistlewood, stick me in the right place. How must I speak? So? All right. Here goes, then."

Mr. Barton's face of mixed pain and disgust showed that he recognized the voice of Miss Enid Wynn.

"Of that speech too," said Dr. Thistlewood, "we will by-and-by have the rest. I use the gramophone systematically for making psychological memoranda; but before we come back to it, I must show you some other documents, which bear on the cases of people who are closely alike physically. On this table—will you come to it?—I have arranged a series of photographs. We'll take this pair to begin with. These two young men, as you see, are strikingly like each other. There is the same mole on the left cheek of each. The hair from both foreheads grows in the same way."

"Yes," said Mr. Barton, "the difference seems mainly one of expression. One of them looks good and amiable; the other has all the look of a thoroughly depraved young ruffian."

"Those," said Dr. Thistlewood, "are photographs of the two Fourriers. Here is a series of similar pairs—the Dantons, the Voirons—you needn't look at all of them; but you must not omit this pair. Here are two photographs, representing the two

Desmoulins. In each pair you have the same thing—a striking resemblance of feature, and a striking difference of expression. Now you shall hear them talk. Each pair of portraits are numbered One and Two. We'll begin with the two Fourriers. In this box is a gramophone-record of some utterance characteristic of each of them. We'll begin with Fourrier I.—the good Fourier." The record was placed in position, and a voice emerged from the instrument, describing in grateful accents the kindness with which the speaker had been treated by certain Belgian Fathers, the sincerity with which he repented of his early religious levity, and his constant sense of the goodness and the presence of *le bon Dieu*. "Now," said Dr. Thistlewood, "I'll give you Fourrier II."

The voice which emerged presently seemed at first to be identical with the preceding; but it quickly changed its tone, and Mr. Barton found himself listening, almost before he knew it, to the obscene rant of an anarchist, who declared that the priests and the bourgeoisie should alike be killed like rats, and boasted of the rapes and thefts which he had committed, and which he threatened to repeat.

"Here," said Dr. Thistlewood, "are other similar records—Voiron I., Voiron II.; Danton I., Danton II., and I dare say twenty more. But the two Desmoulins will be enough for us. Before you listen to them, come and examine their photographs. I have, for the moment, covered up everything but the faces. Except for a difference in the manner in which they do their hair, the faces of these two women can hardly be called distinguishable. The hair of Desmoulins I. is arranged after the fashion of a nun. The hair of Desmoulins II. is touzled over her eyes like the hair of a dancer at a *café chantant*. Would you like to see the figures?" Dr. Thistlewood drew a sheet of paper aside; and one of the figures revealed itself habited in a plain black dress. The hands were clasped devoutly. On the breast was a large cross. The other figure was emphasizing the studied deficiency of its clothing by the manner in which a foot was extended, and a portion of the skirt raised. Dr. Thistlewood then, as before, gave by means of his gramophone a specimen of the voice corresponding to each picture. "Listen," he said, "this is Desmoulins number I. Do you hear? She calls herself 'Sister Martha of the Five Wounds.' She doesn't talk of 'my' dress. She talks of 'our' dress as a nun would, and she has all the intonations of a nun. Now for number II. I must apologize for asking you to listen to what's coming."

What Mr. Barton heard was a snatch or two of a French song, the unrepeatable meaning of which he divined rather than understood, mixed with addresses to some favoured or desired *chéri*, the meaning of which was equally unrepeatable, and very much less

obscure. Dr. Thistlewood stopped the gramophone before the performance was complete.

"Well, Mr. Barton," he said, "I have now given you a few illustrations, and could easily have given you more, of the fact that characters of a violently contrasted kind may belong to organisms which exhibit no perceptible differences, except those which the characters impose on them by modifying facial expression, dress, the doing of the hair, and so forth. I suppose you follow me thus far?"

"I do," said Mr. Barton; "and what you have shown me shows, if you will permit me to say so, that your whole conception of the relation between the organism and the self must be groundless. For if two organisms are alike—so you told us at Cliff's End—the two selves associated with them must be proportionally alike also; but everything which you have just shown me—what does it do? Why, it blows this conclusion to pieces, in the most striking way, in the most convincing way, imaginable. It seems to me that your philosophy has been hoist with its own petard."

"That," replied Dr. Thistlewood, "is a criticism which deserves an answer; but before I attempt one, we'll have one demonstration more. We have had from the gramophone already the few opening words of something that was said by Miss Vivian, and of something that was said by Miss Wynn. Let us now listen to the rest. What Miss Vivian spoke for me was a passage from a favourite book. She named the author. It may interest you to note her taste. Her first words you've heard already. Listen to what comes next."

Mr. Barton listened, and what he heard was this: "Our souls, stirred by the imagination, long to follow those ships; for to us it seems that they are going to some better country—to some land of the heart's desire. But in the lands where the journeys of those ships end, the heart is not satisfied. Sorrow will come down and meet them as soon as they touch the quays. So it is with all the fair things of nature. They awake in us a hunger which they themselves cannot satisfy. What, then, can satisfy it? As Augustine says, He only, by whom all these things were made."

Mr. Barton listened in absolute stillness. Then he averted his head. His eyes swam with tears; and Dr. Thistlewood, divining that this was inevitable, made a noise to proclaim his inattention as he busied himself with a new record.

"Now, Mr. Barton," he said, "I am going to give you something which, though it is certain to cause you pain, it is absolutely necessary, for your own sake, to inflict on you. You will hear an account of an incident in which you played a part yourself."

The gramophone hummed, and the voice of Miss Wynn leaped out from it.

"Come, Dr. Thistlewood," it began, "stick me in the right place. How must I speak? So? All right. Here goes, then. My good aunt, who fancied I was a bit of a heathen, wanted me to see that tame cat of a priest of hers; and partly to please her, for she's an awfully good sort, and partly to see if he was of the same breed as the rest—well, I just said I would." Absolutely reproducing the placidity with which the actual account opened, and the growing excitement and virulence which soon began to infect it, the mimic voice proceeded. "I'd meant at first," it said, "if I could, to have kept my temper, and merely drawn the fool out. I managed to stop pretty cool—I must say that for myself—even when he was trying to come over me with Gods, and his Hells and Heavens, and his Spirit of Evil, and his Fall, and his Book of Genesis, and his Judgment, and his immortal life, and his silly little Sacraments, which he rattled at me like a baby's rattle; but when he took to telling me that my parents were under his severe displeasure, and talked of his giving orders to me—yes, me—as my spiritual director, then at last I let fly, and I gave it him hot and strong." Then some phrases followed relating to the Redemption of the world, which had given a kind of shock to even her original auditors; and the voice wound up by saying, with a half laugh, "I should have liked to have given him a taste of one of his own Sacraments myself, and confessed to him then and there. I think that some of my faults, my own faults, my very grievous faults, would have sent him away cured of any wish to absolve me."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Barton, "horrible! I can listen to no more. Who can doubt, when confronted with depravity and malice such as that, that a living Spirit of Evil makes certain souls his prey? Not only in words to myself, but by the precocious wickedness of her acts, that wretched girl has outraged the sacred sacraments which she derides. Besides Baptism, she has already received two others—Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist; and she laughed, though merely a child, at the moment of receiving both—yes, even at the moment of receiving her Lord's body. I ought, perhaps, to be only sad when I think of her. But I can't contain myself. I am devoured by indignation also."

"I understand your feelings," said Dr. Thistlewood, more gravely than ever. "Were I in your position, they would be mine. Miss Enid Wynn, of whom I know a good deal more than you do, represents everything which is bound to sadden and horrify you. Her intelligence is considerable. It is deliberately directed against all that you hold sacred. She is cruel, after a fashion which is calculated to shock anybody; and the fact that in a selfish way she is very far from unamiable does but exhibit her perversities in a yet more heinous light. For the moment, however, we will drop Miss Wynn,

Mr. Barton, come back to these photographs. There they lie in pairs, one after the other—Fourrier I., Fourrier II., and the rest of them. Well—I have a confession to make to you. For simplicity's sake in explaining things I took you in just now. I led you to assume that these pairs of human beings, so similar in their appearance, were twins. They are not so. Be good enough to look again at the two Fourriers. Fourrier I. and Fourrier II. are not twins. They are one and the same person. The first photograph—that showing the good face—was taken at noon, on the 5th of August, 1899, just after he had said what you heard about his gratitude to the Belgian Fathers. The second photograph was taken at noon, August the 9th, just before or just after that speech of his about rape and murder. In the interval he had been the victim of an attack of hystero-epilepsy, followed by a stupor which lasted thirty-seven hours; and that mild and devout young man woke up from it a blaspheming ruffian. In these two conditions Louis Fourrier is two totally different characters; and in each condition he knows nothing of what he said or did in the other. Here we come again to the Dantons. There's a note of this case—though the ink is rather faint—on the margin. 'Alexis Danton, a native of Arles, educated by his uncle, a priest. Up to the age of fourteen, a nervous boy, exceptionally gentle and religious. At that age, frightened by a viper hidden in a bundle of twigs, is thrown into convulsions, then becomes unconscious, then, on recovering his senses, exhibits wholly new dispositions, knows nothing of his past life, and five weeks later murders an old man in a wood. Is tried for the crime, and whilst the trial is proceeding, a second crisis comes. His original character is restored to him, and all memory and knowledge of his second state disappear.' Here are the two Voirons. That note is by Dr. Remusat. Voiron I. changed into Voiron II. suddenly, and, as it seemed at first, without any change in his physical state whatever. But a change, of course, there had been—a profound change, and its stigma was soon detected. The entire surface of his skin had suddenly become insensible. Here are the pictures of Bourne, Barnes, Hanna—Hanna was a clergyman like yourself—Harris, Alma, Gregson, the celebrated Félida, and so on; but the great case, which will illustrate the matter most clearly, is that of Louise Desmoulins."

"Go on," said Mr. Barton, resignedly. "I have been face to face myself with the depths of human depravity. Whatever you may show me, if it must be so, I can endure."

"I will begin, then," said Dr. Thistlewood, "with a sketch of this woman's life. But first, if you will excuse me"—and here he touched a bell—"I must say something to my servant. Francesco, will you be good enough to push the bioscope forwards? I shall

want the limelight presently. Well, Mr. Barton," he resumed, lowering his voice somewhat, "Louise Desmoulins, between the ages of seventeen and twenty, lived a life of the lowest profligacy. She was then rescued and placed in a convent near Dijon. Her reformation was rapid and remarkable. Her acts of mortification were constant. She was constantly on her knees in the chapel. Angels visited her, and in ecstasy she saw the Virgin. At the end of two years comes a violent nervous crisis, caused by a fall downstairs, and followed by a long lethargy. She wakes up, and her religious life is obliterated. She has the look, the manners, and the language of a vicious woman of the street. You have heard her speak under both conditions. This change from one condition to another continued to recur at intervals till her death at the age of thirty. Generally it was too slow, being accompanied by an intervening torpor, to be susceptible of reproduction by the bioscope. Her case, however, was under my observation for a somewhat prolonged period, and I had my appliances in readiness should a suitable opportunity arise. It came at last. Louise, who for six months had been in a condition of sanctity, fell asleep one morning after breakfast—a thing which, as it was not usual with her, roused the attention of my assistant. He carefully watched her when she awoke up a few hours later, and then he hastily sent for me. 'The change is coming,' he said, 'but it's hardly begun yet.' And so far as I could see at first, her demeanour was still that of Sister Martha of the Five Wounds. In a locked closet, opening from Sister Martha's room, I had secreted that very apparatus which my servant has just finished preparing for us. I told my assistant to get it ready for action, and to start it when I gave the signal. You shall now see what it recorded. Francesco, what's become of you? I want you to close all the shutters. That's right—as tight as you can. And now go to the bioscope."

Presently in the darkness the sheet at the end of the room exhibited a huge circle of blank, unilluminated whiteness. Then the whiteness turned into walls and furniture, bleak and meagre, and depicted in brownish monochrome, and, standing amongst these, was a woman of weak demeanour, who began, having first crossed herself, to dust and arrange the chairs. Her expression was sweet and spiritual, and her movements slow and placid, till she came to a poor looking-glass, before which she abruptly paused, and set herself, as though fascinated by the sight, to examine her own reflection. As she did so her hands began to busy themselves with her dress and hair, the severity of her compressed lips relaxing very gradually into a smile. First her hair was pulled forward till it nearly touched her eyebrows. Then the body of her dress, buttoned high at her throat, was loosened, and as much of her figure was

displayed as the circumstances of the case made possible. Meanwhile, her eyes were losing their late spiritual quiet. As they ogled themselves in the glass, they sparkled, and presently, as was quite evident, her lips hummed some song. Then her feet moved, and she slightly raised her skirts. At this juncture, Dr. Thistlewood came into the field of the picture. The woman turned and saw him, and her transformation was at once complete. She advanced towards him with a dancing step, raising her skirts lightly. Her face was bent somewhat downwards, and her leering eyes were lifted. He was seen to watch her intently, as though she were some curious animal, and then to check her progress with an imperious gesture of the hand. Then the scene flickered, and the illuminated sheet was white again.

Dr. Thistlewood, when the exhibition was over, left Mr. Barton for the moment to the company of his own thoughts, and telling his servant to open one of the windows, added in a low tone—

"Give me box 93A—the locked box—the box containing the series which I took and developed in Gloucestershire. And then you can go. I've something to say to this gentleman of a very private kind."

Mr. Barton, when Dr. Thistlewood returned to him, wore a somewhat dazed expression.

"I feel," he said, "as if you'd been taking me through all the horrors of a madhouse."

Dr. Thistlewood gripped his arm, and, with an almost solemn severity, said—

"Let me look at you. Are you well? Can you bear what is bound to shock you?"

"Yes, yes," replied Mr. Barton, impatiently. "God help me; speak out and have done with it."

"So be it," said Dr. Thistlewood, his solemn manner persisting. "You have seen what has happened to my little fiction of the twins. You have seen how these persons represented by these pairs of portraits—I use the word 'person' in its commonly accepted sense—are severally not, as they seem to be, two persons, but one. You have seen this with special vividness in the case of Louise Desmoulins. Mr. Barton, since you will have it, the case of Miss Vivian and Miss Wynn and the case of Desmoulins are the same. Whether the names of Wynn and Vivian are the names of different souls or not is a question which you must settle as you please. They are, at all events, names for the same body."

Mr. Barton stared. His jaw fell. For some seconds the entire room was silent.

"Come," said Dr. Thistlewood, brusquely, "sit down and recover yourself. Let me get you a glass of brandy. There, drink

that, and don't try to speak for a minute or two. Meanwhile I'll arrange something else; we may possibly find it necessary."

He was still engaged in his operations, over which he had intentionally lingered, when Mr. Barton with recovered voice interrupted him.

"Do you mean to tell me," he gasped, "do you positively mean to tell me—but no, this is lunacy—do I understand you to be seriously asserting that Miss Vivian in reality has never been away at all—that Miss Wynn was Miss Vivian herself, masquerading in different clothes?—that Miss Vivian made a mock of religion? But no—the whole thing's incredible."

Dr. Thistlewood was somewhat relieved by Mr. Barton's apparent calm, though he knew that it was the calm of a consternation which as yet did but partly understand itself.

"I admit," he said, "that it's confusing. Let me tell you the whole story. Miss Vivian, at the beginning of her illness, did go away for a day or two. She was sent to my house at Malvern. Her parents are naturally anxious that her peculiarities should be kept secret, and by the advice of Dr. Gonteau at Nice she was called in her different conditions by two different names. In her case these changes, which have several times occurred, are gradual; and such being the case, I was able, by taking her away for a day or two, to bring her back in her other condition as though she were really a sister. A contingency of this kind had been foreseen by her parents from the first, and two alternative wardrobes were sent with her when she came to Southquay. Her elderly French maid—a discreet and very well-paid person—she knows the secret, but poor Lady Susannah—little does she guess what those two wardrobes mean! As to what happened after the accident with the motor-car, that is simplicity itself. Knowing the turn which events might possibly take, I brought the young lady here, the severe inflammation of her eyes providing me with a good excuse; and here she remained in a very curious state, till one fine morning she woke up as Miss Vivian again, believing herself to have been lying here, unconscious through fever, ever since the memorable storm; and she only knows about that because I thought it best to tell her. I see—I see it in your eyes—and, indeed, I can hardly wonder at it—that the whole story even yet seems nothing to you but a bad dream. If one's in for a painful business, it's best to get it over, and have done with it. Let me show you one thing more, which will probably quicken your comprehension. Will you stay where you are? I am going to close the window again. Now watch the sheet. What the lens is about to throw on it is a room in my house at Malvern, and in that room will take place an incident like the incident which you have already witnessed from the life of the woman Desmoulins."

Again on the sheet came a circle of blank whiteness. Then the whiteness again gave place to a room, this one being daintily, though very simply furnished; and there, on a sofa, was lying a female figure, whose dark hair unbound was dishevelled on a pale pillow. The eyes were closed, the limbs were quiet as a statue's. Mr. Barton held his breath. He was looking at Miss Vivian. The limbs were quiet, but he realized in a few seconds that a movement, though not of the limbs, had already begun somewhere. It was a heaving of the beloved breast. Suddenly with a start she that seemed dead rose. With her eyes wide open she lifted herself into a sitting posture. She stared, blinked, frowned, and her mouth opened and moved like the mouth of one who shouts. Then from behind some curtain a woman, evidently a nurse, approached, stroked her hair, and spoke to her with reassuring gestures; whereupon a little dog sprang up and scratched at the invalid's coverlet. Mr. Barton, meanwhile, had heard a humming behind him, followed by Dr. Thistlewood's words—"Listen, they are going to talk;" and a voice, which he recognized as the voice of Miss Enid Wynn, cried, "Hi, there! where am I? What the devil is all this?" "It's all right, miss," said the nurse. "You've been ill since that day in the hunting-field." The invalid blinked again, and then catching sight of the dog, "Take the little brute away," she said. "Why the dickens have they brought it here?" Then the gramophone ceased, and the pictured scene vanished.

"Mr. Barton," said Dr. Thistlewood, who was now opening the window-shutters, "the last veil has been withdrawn from the seclusion of Miss Nest Vivian. I have withdrawn it only because she is the woman whom you have hoped to marry."

From Mr. Barton there came no word of answer. Still seated, as though in profound meditation, with his head bent forwards, he was resting his chin on his high clerical waistcoat. At last he rose, drew himself up with an air of suppressed haughtiness, and, turning to Dr. Thistlewood, broke into an unnatural laugh.

"Probably," he said, in a voice hardly less unnatural, "you don't believe in the New Testament. But this is a case of possession. I recognize every symptom. For such evils even to-day there is One who can provide a cure. I thank you. You have done your duty. My God, let me go out and think."

CHAPTER VI

As a rule any great calamity is, in proportion to its magnitude, inadequately realized by its victim at the moment of its actual incidence; partly because it inflicts a shock by which the mind is at first paralyzed, partly because its effects are complex, revealing themselves to the victim's consciousness slowly, and one by one. It is never, indeed, borne so easily as it is at the first moment.

Of this fact Mr. Barton now provided an illustration. The idea that Miss Vivian's case was really one of possession was, no doubt, in its own way appalling, for it brought before him the dread power of evil in an almost visible form; yet, under the shock just sustained by him, it cheered him till he reached his house, for it offered him a solution of his difficulties, and also a practical hope, both of which were in accordance with his own beliefs. But when he found himself immured in his library, and exercise no longer distracted him, he soon came to perceive that this idea was not tenable, and was fraught, indeed, with consequences more intolerable than those which it seemed to obviate. Evil spirits most certainly did take possession of human beings. This was indubitable; for the Lord had cast them out, and the apostles in the Lord's name. But if Miss Wynn was really an evil spirit, she had been cast out, and Miss Vivian's soul had been reinstated, not by the operation of any spiritual grace, but merely by some faggots in a waggon, and by a badly driven motor-car. Mr. Barton had witnessed the performance by certain amateurs, his parishioners, of the old farce "Box and Cox," in which a hatter and a printer—one at home only during the day, the other only during the night—were, without knowing it, tenants of the same lodgings. This old farce now recurred to him; and his conception of Miss Wynn and Miss Vivian as a girl and a she-devil, alternately occupying the tenement of the same body, and sleeping in the same bed, in accordance with a series of purely physical accidents, such as those induced by motor-cars and electrical conditions of the atmosphere, would lead, he reflected, to a materialism even more farcical than Dr. Thistlewood's. It would justify the crude puerilities of that wretched child, Hugo Arundel.

Had Miss Vivian been a person unknown or indifferent to him, and had the facts of her case come to him through hearsay only, he would have set them contemptuously aside as an old wife's fable. But to do this was impossible. The facts were there. They were quivering in him like poisoned arrows. They were the walls of a trap enclosing him; and he fancied—for little things will at times madden the wisest—that Mr. Hugo was peeping at him, with ignorant amusement in his eyes. Mr. Barton's mood became that of a hunted animal at bay; and, animated by the passionate thought that he was fighting for the soul and God, he brought down his clenched fist with a sounding blow on the writing-table.

Then this forlorn ebullition of righteous anger spent itself, and another process began in him of a very different kind. Two pictures, and two sets of verbal memories, began by turns to shine before his inward eyes, and thrill in his inward ears. He saw Miss Vivian looking at him as she had looked at him outside the church on that sacred Christmas morning when he had taken his first walk with her. He saw her as she was when he had talked to her about God and human affection. He saw her as she was when, although then unwittingly, she had given her lips to his. He heard the tones of her voice as they had touched him on each of these occasions. His heart went out to her, reverent, pleading, desperate. Then this image and this voice would both undergo a change. The eyes of his desire would suddenly stare contempt at him, and those lips of prayer and purity would assail with their mockings both him and his God also. With a spasm of incredulity which fought in vain against conviction, he asked himself if the lips which had once touched his own were those very lips which in his own hearing had been horrible with malice and blasphemy.

From intellectual, from moral, and from emotional tortures such as these, there seemed to be no escape. One passed from his consciousness only to give place to another, till the series began anew in a fatal and closed circle. He heard his maid's voice, like a voice in a dream, saying to him, "Luncheon is ready, if you please, sir."

"Leave it on the table," said Mr. Barton, wearily. "I'll take what I want when I'm ready for it. And stay—run over to the Vicarage, and say that I've just been with a doctor. I have what the doctors would call a neuralgic headache, and for a day or two may be unfit for anything. Ask the Vicar to arrange about the services with Mr. Moore and with Mr. Entwistle. Or, no—I'll write a line myself. Don't go telling people that I'm ill. All I want is to be left absolutely quiet."

When the note had been written and despatched, a new impulse took possession of him. Quitting his house, which he now felt to be intolerable, he wandered off with his sorrows to a little

unfrequented bay, where he threw himself down on the softness of the white sand, and the sighs and the murmurs of the water lulled him out of the sense of time. When at length he roused himself, he was conscious of a bright and tender thought, stealing into the blank misery which now made up his being, and bringing to him a new hope. It was the thought of Miss Vivian, as she must have been when a little child, before her troubles, whatever might be their nature, fell on her. Here, at all events, was a soul fresh from the hands of God, which could not be lost or sullied except through its own perversity. However its life might be hidden, it was impossible that its life should cease; and, come what might, he never would let it go.

When he re-entered his house, he found a note from his Vicar, saying all that was suitable, and mildly recommending him to take a few days' holiday, since he was, as the Vicar knew, only too apt to overwork himself. There was also another note, with a voluminous enclosure, from Dr. Thistlewood, and a bulky packet, the direction of which was in Dr. Thistlewood's handwriting.

"I told you," Dr. Thistlewood said, "that there were many details which I could not explain this morning; but, now that you have had time to reflect on the general character of the situation, the enclosed documents will help you in forming a clearer estimate of it. They are the memoranda of Miss Vivian's case, made by Dr. Gonteau, of Nice, who has known her from her birth onwards. I want you to realize that this case does not stand alone. It belongs to a very peculiar, yet a comparatively numerous class, which has only of late years begun to be recognized and studied; and it has by this time an entire literature of its own. I could, were this necessary, send you fifty volumes dealing with it. It will be enough if I send you two. Each is a monograph, consisting of some five hundred pages, containing a minute account of a case similar to Miss Vivian's. They are the most recent and most elaborate contributions to the study of this subject which we possess. I have placed some sheets of notes in them which will inform you of the character of each, and have specified the chapters or passages to which I would specially draw your attention. I am also adding a volume by a Roman Catholic psychologist, in which the existence of these cases is admitted, and is frankly acknowledged to be a fact with which Christian thinkers must deal. Were I you, I should go away for a day or two. Rest and change of scene would, I am confident, do much to clear your thoughts."

Mr. Barton, still disposed to be sanguine, left the book-packet unopened, and at once addressed himself to an examination of the memoranda of the French doctor. Inanition—for he had not tasted his luncheon—compelled him to eat something; but Dr.

Gonteau's memoranda, lying beside his plate, claimed more of his attention than his food did; and the rest of the evening, in order that he might master the subject thoroughly, he devoted to making a translation of the more important parts of them, omitting nothing but a variety of purely medical details. After many hours of work, his translation was completed, and was as follows:—

"Enid Nest Wynn Vivian, aged 19, in 19—. Single: born in France: the child of wealthy parents. The father Welsh: mother Belgian. Traces of religious excitability in father's family. Want of moral balance in father's character. Caught cheating at cards, though in no pecuniary difficulties. Left his own country in consequence. Maternal grandmother attached to court of King . . . of . . . Beautiful: very devout: reputed to be King's mistress. Mother divorced from first husband. Accomplished, open-handed, sceptical in matters of religion.

"Enid was from the first a mischievous, though a clever child. To all appearance her physical health was perfect. She was always alarming her attendants by making her escape from the nursery. On two occasions (aged four) found her way into the streets. Discovered on first occasion playing with three strange boys. On the second had been taken to police-station. Discovered sitting, on table, talking and laughing with inspector. Her nurses, Catholics, complained of her disinclination to say her prayers, or for her irreverent manner of saying them. She was constantly reproved for her use of slang and profane expressions, her delight in these being increased by the perception that they shocked her elders.

"At the age of six she caught a severe chill, and was laid up for a week, bearing her illness with very great impatience. This was succeeded by a long period of somnolence. After the disappearance of this symptom, it was noticed by both nurses that her disposition had undergone some change. She was quiet, gentle, talked no slang, said her prayers with remarkable diligence and devotion, and asked many questions about religion.

"This change persisted for twenty-one days, after which she was frightened by the falling of a china jar. The fright was succeeded by a violent throbbing of the temples, and this by a deep sleep, which was evidently hypnoleptic in character. When she woke it was observed that her disposition had reverted to that which it had been three weeks ago —in other words, the disposition which she had manifested from the cradle.

"Except for this interval of three weeks, the development of her character was continuous up to the age of ten. At the age of seven she was sent as a day pupil to the convent at Cimiez. She spent much of her leisure time with three boys, the sons of an English gentleman, occupant of a neighbouring villa, romping with them and getting them into all kinds of trouble. At the convent she was precocious in her studies, but was constantly in disgrace for laughing at the Sisters, at the books supplied for study, and at the character of the instruction generally.

"At the age of ten fell when climbing an olive tree, and was carried home insensible. Remained so for twenty hours, and woke up with no

memory of her past life except the three weeks preceding the fall of the china jar, which she seemed to imagine had only just taken place. Her first question was, 'What has happened to the bits?' Her disposition, too, was similar to what it had been during the weeks in question. She was gentle, and religious, said her prayers devoutly, and often accompanied a lady, an acquaintance of her parents, to the English church. She exhibited, moreover, a strong taste for poetry, and was very fastidious as to her dress, rejecting with contempt the clothes previously worn by her. In this idiosyncrasy her mother was delighted to indulge her, allowing her to buy hats, boots, gloves, stockings, and lingerie, as she pleased. As to her general health, she was not so robust as formerly, and for two years was taken care of by an English clergyman's widow, who lived alternately at Mentone and a small village near Geneva. During this period she called herself by her second name, Nest ; having always been known previously by her other and her first name, Enid.

"At the end of this period, she, being then just twelve, was thrown from a donkey between Mentone and St. Agnese, was much shaken, and experienced a kind of paroxysm at the sight of her injured clothes, and especially her disfigured hands. An illness of three days followed, ending in hypnoleptic torpor. On fourth day woke up with character and memories of Enid, and unable to account for the situation in which she found herself. Soon showed herself unmanageable by the lady in charge of her, and clamoured to be sent back to Cimiez.

"Went back, as Enid, to her parents, and for three years—that is, till she was fifteen—showed rapid development, but no radical change of character. Affected mannish clothing, and drove a pair of ponies. Took no interest in poetry or any kind of fiction, but eagerly read books which dealt with what she called 'facts.' Began to attend lectures on physiology given by myself and others, also lectures on the science of Comparative Religion. Wrote, from her recollections of these last, a crude but singularly clever essay on the Bible and Babylonia, quoting with considerable effect from the Chaldean story of the Deluge, as told by Utnapishtim to Gilgamesh. This she copied out fair, in a bold but rather childish hand, and sent it to the Superior of the Convent in which she had received her early education. Said no prayers, nor attended any place of worship.

"At the age of fifteen was knocked down at Nice races, when saving a child from being killed by a galloping horse. Illness initiated by slight concussion of brain. On recovery at the end of week has reverted to the character of Nest, who knows of nothing that has happened since the fall from the donkey near Mentone. Is restored at her own request to the care of her former guardian, under whom her education, religious and secular, progresses. Dresses with great coquetry. Is taken to several dances, and much admired. Slight and purely imaginative love affair with young Danish officer. Learns to paint in water-colours. Religious feeling strong.

"Having lived thus for a year in the character of Nest, is, at the age of sixteen, alarmed by a violent thunderstorm, during which the old church at Mentone was partly destroyed by lightning. An attack of illness supervenes similar to those that preceded it, and ultimately the character of Nest gives place again to that of Enid.

"The character of Enid persists for the next two years and a half. Enid returns to her parents, becomes more and more independent, acquires an automobile, which she learns to drive herself, associates familiarly with chauffeurs. On one occasion goes, as a boy, to a bal masquè. One of her adventures in particular makes her parents think it advisable to send her for a time elsewhere. An Anglo-Jewish stock-broker, with a wife superior to himself, take her with them to Cairo, to a lodge in Scotland, and to a hunting-box in the English Midlands. During this period, at her parents' desire, she drops the name of Vivian, and is known as Enid Wynn. Her present protectors—not perhaps the best of judges—report nothing objectionable in her conduct. In the winter of 19—, at the age of eighteen years and two months, she has an attack of influenza, induced by a chill caught in the hunting-field. This lasts ten days. She then quits her bed, and is taken out of doors. A relapse ensues, resulting from a fresh chill. A few days later complains of violent headache, light pains her, she is kept in a dark room, exhibits fear of every one, mistakes people for snakes. Gradually these symptoms disappear, she becomes so weak that she can hardly swallow, and sinks finally into a sort of trance-like collapse, supposed at first to be death.

"On emerging from this state, though her weakness somewhat disguised the fact, she exhibited a change of manner which her friends and attendants thought curious. An account of her was sent to her parents, and to myself also, and we at once divined what must have already happened or be impending. Arrangements were promptly made for her transference to the care of an aunt who resides in the south-west of England, a considerable payment being made by the parents on her account, with a view to her remaining under the aunt's care permanently. I went myself to England to superintend her removal. She was brought to the house of my friend, Dr. Maddison, in Harley Street, still in a state of very imperfect consciousness. There, after a few hours of profound torpor, she awoke, to all appearance well, but she awoke in the character of Nest, and when she was told that she was being taken to her relations in England, in order to regain her strength, she imagined herself to be just recovering from the effects of the thunderstorm at Mentone, more than two years ago, the storm and her own terror being the last things she remembered.

"I took her to Southquay, and she has not been under my observation since. Her nervous condition is still highly unstable, but a healthy life, not too dull, yet wanting in occasions of agitation, may lead to restoration of health, and possible permanence of present condition."

It was midnight before Mr. Barton had finished extracting and translating these passages; and so deeply had the work engrossed him that a letter, by a late post, had been brought in and placed beside him without his having paused to notice it. When his work was done, it was staring at him. He saw that it was from Lady Susannah.

"I was so sorry," she wrote, "to see the other night at Lord Cotswold's that you, dear Mr. Barton, were evidently still suffering. I could see it from your face at the time; and now my maid has

heard from your nice cook-landlady that you have been 'dreadful bad,' as she puts it, with a sort of neuralgic headache. I hope it's quite gone by this time; but, if it isn't, will you let me send you a stick of something, which is made up of wax, camphor, and peppermint; and if you rub it on your temples, it will take the pain away.

"And now, dear Mr. Barton, I want to say something else; and if I go on to ask you a searching question, you must not think that I do so out of any prying curiosity. Since your return from Nice, though you brought with you her parents' approval, you have said nothing more to me about Nest—I mean about your hopes and intentions. Has there been any misunderstanding? Nest has been just as silent about the subject as you have. I thought at Lord Cotswold's party that your behaviour to her was rather odd. I ask you this because Nest herself seems suffering. I noticed this at the party first, and since then she has become, not physically ill, but pensive. I went yesterday to see her about something in her sitting-room, and I found her poring over that beautiful book you gave her, with pictures of the Visions of the Saints in it. She was looking at them—I hardly know how to put it—well, as a girl might look who was looking at a picture of her *fiancé*, and I have my suspicions that she was in your church before breakfast, I don't know for how long, without having eaten anything. You remember our old anxiety about her on this score. I won't ask you for any secrets, but if there's some trouble which you know about, cannot you make things straight, one way or the other? When are you coming to see her again about Confirmation? Or do you think—— But, no—I will say no more till I hear from you."

Confirmation! The word was like a blow. Unless Miss Wynn were really an alien and invading spirit, Miss Vivian, however abnormal her condition might have been at the time, had been confirmed already. How could he prepare her for a sacrament which, once received, could never be received again? This question, as he asked it, made his forehead grow cold and wet. Worn out as he was, he could not face it now, any more than he had been able to deduce any intelligible conclusions from the succession of complicated facts which he had just been picking out and transcribing from the original record. These must be gone over—an anxious task—to-morrow. And here there suddenly occurred to him two sentences of advice—one in his Vicar's letter, the other in Dr. Thistlewood's. This was the advice that he should go away for a day or two, and rest, or—as he put it to his own soul—hide himself. If this was to be done at all, it might as well be done at once. In no case would it be desirable for him to see Miss Vivian immediately; and for the present Lady Susannah's news of her soothed rather than alarmed him.

He would start to-morrow for somewhere. In the morning he would decide where. But Lady Susannah's letter must, at all events, be dealt with now. His answer was brief, and he posted it before going to bed.

"So far as I am concerned," he wrote, "no complication has arisen of a kind to distress your niece. Things may have to be postponed. I shall be the only sufferer. If anything which strikes you as excessive church-going continues, will you let me know? but do not check her, unless it seems absolutely necessary. I am still rather out of sorts, and one of the other curates will, for a day or two, undertake my Confirmation classes. As to her, a perplexing fact has just come to my knowledge. A communication has reached me from Nice to the effect that she has been confirmed already. This, it appears, was in her childhood, but a nervous attack, like that from which she has just recovered, has erased the fact from her memory, and her parents—Heaven help them—never thought it worth their while to tell her. A little later, when I have had more time to reflect, I will explain the matter to her myself. You may trust me, I think, to do my best for her. Yes, Lady Susannah, you are right: I am not quite well; and Dr. Thistlewood, of whom you have so high an opinion, thinks that a short holiday—I shall not go further than Startmouth—will do more for me than the stick of wax and peppermint with which you propose that I should rub myself."

CHAPTER VII

GAUTAMA the Blessed One, and many other men besides, have been moved to fight out the battles of the Spirit in the wilderness. For Mr. Barton no wilderness of the traditional kind was available—no Bo-tree—no Mount of God; but some twelve miles off was Starmouth, a meek, old-fashioned watering-place, at this season always empty, whose inhabitants and whose streets would be strange to him, and where he could wander about the beach alone.

He made his migration thither duly the following morning. Often as he had passed it in the train on his way to and from London, he had never before entered it; and when a station omnibus set him down at an old-world hostelry, he could have fancied himself in a foreign town. Here he spent three days, face to face with his troubles; and, little by little, as he confronted them, they showed themselves in their varied nakedness.

The first afternoon he took with him his translation of Dr. Gonteau's memoranda, and re-read them on the deserted sands. Before he had had time to finish the opening sentences, the whole became fraught with a meaning for him to which overnight he had been blind. In spite of the wasp's-nest of perplexities which Lady Susannah's reference to Miss Vivian's Confirmation had roused in him, he had gone to sleep still drawing comfort from the thoughts of his loved one in her earliest childhood, when her soul, her true self, had been free from all strange vicissitudes, and of the beautiful years which gave earnest of others that were yet to be. The same thought was his companion during his short journey; and when he opened Dr. Gonteau's records, it was still there to sustain him. But now he saw in a flash that, if these records meant anything, this thought was the most vain of dreams; and its place was taken by another, brutally bald and simple, whose import was precisely opposite. If the child as born into the world, the little child as baptized, is the true soul, the immortal indivisible self fresh from the hands of God, and if any other apparent self supervening is not a true self at all, then the true self in this case was not the Miss Vivian whom he loved, but the portent that had masqueraded as her sister.

Enid Nest Wynn Vivian, so the pitiless record assured him, had, till she was ten years old, been recognized by all who knew her, her religious teachers included, as a perfect, healthy, and exceptionally clever child. What was the difference between her and any other of those unhappy children who, from childhood onwards, prefer evil to good? Of all the faculties possessed by the God-created human soul, none attested more clearly that soul's divine origin than conscience—the mystical faculty by which good and evil are distinguished; and the presence of this faculty in Enid Wynn was conspicuous, for ill-doing, even in the nursery, had afforded her an impish pleasure. Unless it could be maintained that all sinners were phantoms—and if this were so, why should Christ have died for them?—the soul of Enid was as real as the soul of the greatest saint.

And on this consideration there followed the overwhelming question—if his own one, his beloved one, were not a true soul, what was she? Was she merely an iridescence on the quagmire of organic matter—a series of patterns formed, and then unformed, by the joltings of the brute particles of that child's kaleidoscope, the brain? Then the thwarted passion of the lover expanded itself into the anger of the theologian. "If such is the case," he cried out to himself, "with one soul, is it not the case with all? What then will become of us? Is not our faith vain? Is not all life a mockery? Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Ludicrous!" He launched a clenched fist forwards, with a subconscious sense of assaulting the grin of some scientific opponent—it might have been Dr. Thistlewood's, it might have been Mr. Hugo's; and his knuckles were stung by a bathing-machine, under the shelter of which he was lying.

With a bitter impatience he rose. He pocketed his sheets of memoranda, and set himself to pace—now slowly, now with a feverish quickness—the mile of deserted esplanade which ran between a common and the sea. The anger of the theologian gave place to the lover's misery. Miss Vivian's lips cried to him; his hands seemed stretched towards her. Then her voice would be muffled by the mockeries of Miss Enid Wynn, and his whole being grew faint with a spasm like that of nausea. So that desolate afternoon wore away to a desolate evening; and night found him like a rudderless and sailless vessel, rocked this way and that on the waters of his own misery.

The following day his troubles, though not abated, began to assume some more definite order, and separated themselves, like oil and water, into two distinct kinds. One related purely to his own personal affections; the other to his entire conception of the nature of man and God, and the question of whether all that he held sacred were not merely some monstrous dream.

So far as he personally, and his own affections were concerned, his case, he now sadly told himself, did not differ in essentials, but only in its strange accidents, from that of many other lovers, between whom and the women loved by them tragic gulfs had opened. Any such mere private tragedy, he was convinced, though he did not yet feel, would be bearable with the aid of prayer and resignation to the Divine Will, which would suffer no pure affection to come to nought.

But in his own case, unlike that of the lovers with whom he compared himself, beyond and behind his merely personal difficulties, were others which at once rose out of, and interpenetrated them, and which threatened the very foundations of the fortitude with which they might have been borne otherwise, and which were not personal, but universal. Here were problems connected with the very foundations of the Catholic faith, with the entire sacramental system, with the redemption of the world by Christ, with the question of whether there were anything susceptible or worthy of redemption, and with that high philosophy of mind from which, as from an intellectual rock, he had been accustomed to look down with scorn at the idle foam of materialism.

By an effort of will he freed himself from the thought of his private sorrows, and fixed his mind on these fundamental, these all-comprehending questions. That second day he was out on the esplanade again, traversing it this way and that like a forlorn sentinel, till his pale abstracted face and striking figure became a familiar perplexity to the few loiterers whose presence, like his own, accentuated rather than broke the solitude. It seemed to some of them that this strange man must be a lunatic; for sometimes his head would be sunk as though in profound dejection. Sometimes his eyes would be on fire, and his fists would strike the air. And his moods alternated for a time in accordance with the alternations of his demeanour. Now his faith would be prostrate, but not killed. It grovelled; but its pain, as it did so, was a measure of its untouched vitality. Now from this condition of dishonour it would rise defiant and erect. The soul shone before him, not only as the chief, but as also the most obvious of all certainties. The enemies of God were scattered. Those that hated Him fled before Him. The fighter for God recovered his challenging and scornful courage. This latter mood gradually tended to preponderate: but it still was subject to rebuffs, as facts, such as the apparent divisibility of the human soul, broke over it like a wave which threatened to submerge everything. On one of these occasions, wearied both in mind and body, he seated himself in a corner of one of those wooden shelters, which were frequent on the esplanade at Starmouth, as they are in like places elsewhere. When he entered it the little structure was

vacant; nor was he aware that two nurses, whose charges were digging on the sands, had settled themselves shortly afterwards in the corner opposite to his own, and looked at each other as some murmured syllables from time to time escaped him. At last he was himself startled by the sound of his own voice. "My God," he heard himself ejaculating, "why hast Thou forsaken me?"

To the women his words were audible only as a more emphatic murmur; but he, fearing that he had exposed himself, rose and went away. To escape the chance of recognition he left the neighbourhood of the shore, and betook himself to an inland road, lined with scattered houses, and leading he knew not where; and by-and-by, recessed between two small villas, he came on a building which he recognized as a Roman Catholic church. He turned and entered; and this home of another communion, though that communion was according to his theories schismatical, provided him with a subtle comfort, which he might not have found so readily under the arches of his own chancel. It filled him with a sense of the majesty of the holy Church universal—of the saints, the martyrs, the scholars, the great philosophers, and also of all those common and countless myriads, who age after age, and in all countries of the world, have borne witness by their lives and deaths to the faith by which he lived himself. He did not fight alone. All these were with him: and he felt that under him was the support of the everlasting arms.

He emerged from the building strengthened, but not cured of his troubles. Like sea-sick passengers on a ship, who, convinced though they may be that they will not lose their lives, continue none the less to suffer the recurring pangs of death, he experienced doubt as a torment, though he did not experience it as a danger. His faith was like a friend, in whose character he had never ceased to believe, though circumstances, in the eyes of the world, combined to stain and ruin it, and whose integrity in the eyes of all men he must, for his own sake, vindicate. Strengthened, however, he was, like a knight-errant rearmed; and that such was the case he realized by his own actions. Instead of remaining in the company of his unaided thoughts, he returned to his hotel, unpacked Dr. Thistlewood's books; and for the rest of that day, and for the whole of the day following, he set himself to examine those parts of them which Dr. Thistlewood had commended to his notice, so that he might face the facts of the situation in their most formidable and specific forms. The volumes were accompanied by a sheet of paper, on which were written the following notes as to their contents:—

"Number 1. An Account, given in minutest detail, of a young woman, Miss B., who developed, in the course of her life, four

characters at least, each of which had its own separate memories, and had no knowledge of the existence of the three others. One of these characters persisted for eight years. What will mainly interest you here, are the pages mentioned below, which will show you with what singular exactness some of the incidents of Miss B.'s divided lives resemble details known to you in connection with Miss Wynn Vivian. See specially the scene in which she mistakes her doctor for a former lover; also the tabulated accounts of her different tastes and feelings with regard to dress, books, amusements, prayer, religion, etc., as exhibited by her in two of her contrasted and mutually hostile phases."

"Number 2. An account of Mr. Hanna, an accomplished American clergyman. Mr. Hanna, one day, fell on his head out of a pony-cart, and was put to bed unconscious. When he woke again to consciousness, his entire past life was gone from him, and a new life and character had to be built up from the beginning. He had no religious feelings. He was taken to his own church. It woke in him no memories. He was to have been married. Of this fact he now knew nothing, and fixed his affections presently on a new object. Formerly a teetotaller, and an enemy of all frivolous amusements, he now drank beer in music-halls, and developed a lively delight in the antics of half-nude dancers. See undermentioned pages. Note specially the manner in which the second character constructed itself."

"Number 3. A typical work—a text-book of psychology by a Roman Catholic cleric. He takes some account of the structure of the brain and the nervous system generally; but, like yourself, he treats them, and it is his main object to exhibit them, as a mere piece of mechanism, which is used by a transcendental soul behind them—the unseen, indivisible entity, which alone is the true self. The writer's arguments being your own, there is one passage only which you need take the trouble to read. It is a passage in which he deals with the existence of apparently divided selves. He takes one case only—he is probably familiar with only one—namely, the celebrated case of the woman Félida. His endeavour is to prove, from the facts given by the investigators, that Félida's so-called separate selves were merely modifications of an underlying and indestructible unity. I give the page below, together with the other references."

It was to this third volume that Mr. Barton turned first. The writer admitted that the alleged astonishing facts were not only genuine, but also at first sight terribly perplexing to the Christian; but they only required, he said, to be examined with sufficient care, and the whole significance imputed to them by the doctors who watched and recorded them disappeared. For what, he asked, did

we learn from the records of the case of Félida? We learnt, he proceeded, that though certain circumstantial memories were peculiar to each of this woman's different phases, and were not possessed by her in the others, yet all these phases had a stock of memories in common —memories of a general kind, like a stem from which they all grew. Such were her memories of the French language and the multiplication table; and a host of others, which she obviously possessed in every phase alike. Here was a fact which the materialists at once admitted and overlooked, and the moment its significance was grasped, it was fatal to their whole position. Such cases as Félida's might be interesting in many secondary ways, but they did nothing—such was his curt conclusion—to cast any doubt whatever on the unity of the human soul.

This piece of criticism, though it did not solve all his difficulties, encouraged Mr. Barton in the conviction that they were all ultimately soluble; and he turned to the two long monographs on the cases of Miss B. and Mr. Hanna, feeling that to study them would be now almost superfluous. He did indeed cast his eye over the passages which Dr. Thistlewood had commended to him, and now and then sighed when he realized the startling likeness between many of the incidents recorded in connection with Miss B., and others no less staggering, with which he was but too familiar; but nowhere in the passages which Dr. Thistlewood thought so important did he catch the suggestion of anything like a new idea. In both these volumes, however, he succeeded in discovering something which Dr. Thistlewood had either overlooked or at least forborne to mention. This was the fact that the historians of Miss B.'s case, and of Mr. Hanna's—these men being the doctors by whom the two subjects were attended—exhibited as to one point a most striking and unlikely agreement. In defiance of their own theories, they alike systematically assumed that the subjects of their respective studies, however their lives might be disintegrated, had each a true self somewhere, if only it could be found and fixed. This great fact dawned on him that same evening in his bedroom, and the whole of the following day he devoted to its verification. In each of these elaborate volumes, let him open its pages where he would, he came upon such phrases as the "true" or the "real" Mr. Hanna, or the "true" or the "real" Miss B.; and in each case the doctors declared that they had at last succeeded in restoring this real self to natural and stable integrity. At once Mr. Barton's mind sprang into new activity. The clerical psychologist's criticism of the case of Félida sufficed for the time to allay his intellectual perplexities, and enabled him to fix his mind on a solution of them which would be complete and practical. Dr. Thistlewood should be confuted at once by fact and argument. Mr. Barton was eager to

meet him again, confident in his new position; and before going to bed on the third evening of his retreat, he made arrangements for returning to Southquay by the earliest train next morning.

It was not yet eight o'clock when he entered his own door again. His first care was to ask whether any letters had come for him. There might be one from Miss Vivian—such was his secret thought. But there was not. He saw on his desk a single envelope only, addressed in a hand unknown—the hand evidently of a clerk. He turned away from it with a sigh, and while his customary coffee was preparing, he stole into his own church. The whole atmosphere of this edifice was poignant with memories of Miss Vivian, and of the prayers, and of that memorable sermon, which had been filled and fired with his solicitude for her. The thought of her was mixing itself with his prayers in the shadowy chancel now, when suddenly in the background of his consciousness, like some unclean reptile, stirred the image of Miss Enid Wynn. Pain, acute though no longer hopeless, was once more gnawing at his heart; and feeling, when he rose from his knees, that his troubles were not ended yet, he stole on tiptoe down one of the side aisles, as though fearful of observation, towards a small door of exit. All at once he became aware of the presence of a solitary kneeling figure. With a rapid movement he drew back behind a neighbouring pillar, and, hiding himself as completely as possible, he ventured to look again. His first impression had been correct. The kneeling figure was none other than that of Miss Vivian herself. There was little chance of her observing him, unless some sound disturbed her. Her eyes, which for him had now a more than earthly beauty, saw, if they saw anything external, the chancel and the altar only, and her thoughts were far away. A passionate longing filled Mr. Barton's heart to kneel down at her side, and bury every hateful difficulty in a union of his prayers with hers. But a trembling reverence, united with the dictates of common-sense, restrained him, and only his unspoken words, unheard by herself, went out to her. "How could I doubt? How could my faith fail me? However your earthly vesture may at times disguise and hide you, I have seen the self, the soul in you, which nothing can take away."

Unnoticed, and moving noiselessly, he gained the door and departed, taking care not to disturb her by so much as the clinking of a latch.

When he re-entered his library, where his coffee-pot was now glistening, he perceived an object which had not been there before. During his absence in the church the early post had arrived, bringing another letter for him. It was lying by the one which he had hardly cared to notice. At the sight of it his heart palpitated. It was the

letter for which he had hungered. It was from Miss Vivian. He tore it open, and devoured the following words :—

"DEAR MR. BARTON.

"I have had no real conversation with you since the day when you came to see me, and when you had to go away almost directly, because you felt so ill. I don't count that time at Lord Cotswold's. Nothing like real talking was possible then, of course, and everybody was rather foolish, and everything was at cross purposes. I want to tell you that, since then, I have been growing to understand many things—things about which you, and you only, of all men, have ever spoken to me, and I think that before long I may have to come and consult you—yes, and tell you everything, as I could do to no one else. But let me wait till I am quite certain of my own inmost self—or at least as certain as I can be without consulting you. When that time comes I will write to you, and we will arrange a meeting, and if we should meet before then, please not to speak about this. I want to say nothing until I feel that I am quite ready for you. In matters like these you are my best, you are indeed my only friend.

"Yours,

"N. V.

"P.S.—Since we met that night at Lord Cotswold's, when we neither of us, I think, were very well, I have had nothing in the way of health to trouble me but tiresome dreams, which leave one rather unrefreshed in the morning. But I get up early, and am refreshed in other ways. I hope your headache is gone."

Mr. Barton, on reading this letter, experienced the unfathomable relief which the sea-sick passenger experiences when his ship is at last in harbour. Then relief was transfigured, and took the form of rapture. The heavens were opened, and poured benediction down on him. He sank on his knees to receive the divine influx. He hid himself from the common daylight in the darkness of his clasped hands, and there in the darkness God and the human soul he loved seemed to have drawn so close to him that he knew not which was closest.

Presently, as a means of regaining his contact with human life, and assuring himself that he was not dreaming, he took up the letter which he had thus far neglected. The envelope bore the postmark of Belfast, his native place. Except for an uncle, a banker, he had had, since his father's death, no correspondent in the town; the uncle wrote but rarely, and the size and look of the envelope, no less than the direction, showed that this missive could hardly have come from him. Mr. Barton broke the seal, and extracted

a quarto sheet. It was headed by the name of a firm quite strange to his memory; nor did he even realize what the nature of its business was till he had read the communication through. When he had done this he found himself in possession of the fact that his uncle had died intestate a few days ago; that his fortune amounted to something like four hundred thousand pounds; that the heir of this was his sole surviving relative; and that his sole surviving relative was the Reverend T. Barton, his nephew.

Mr. Barton's indifference to money, as a means of self-indulgence, was absolute. Except as a power which enabled him to serve the Church, he had hardly been conscious of possessing it till the prospect of marriage dawned on him. Then his comparative affluence had acquired a further meaning for him, since it enabled him to offer a home to a delicately nurtured wife; but, apart from the confidence which it gave him in the character of a suitor, the idea of personal affluence formed no part of his consciousness. This condition of mind, however, had for the moment, at all events, ceased to be any longer possible. Affluence had suddenly assured the undreamed-of form of wealth; and a sense that his whole position had somehow been greatly changed was forced on him no less sharply than it would have been if, instead of a fortune, what had come to him had been a pair of wings. Even now he could have said with absolute truth that of worldly pomps and vanities no single image had arisen to play any part in his agitation; but, nevertheless, the heir to very nearly half a million was vaguely aware of a strength which had not been his before. But a strength of what kind, and usable for what purposes? In accordance with its ruling passions, his nature soon gave an answer. Allying itself with the new hopes produced by Miss Vivian's letter, and also by his recent sight of her, this sense of strength, which was suggested to him by the possession of a great income, lost its primary form before a few minutes were over, and, transmuted by a process which was human if not logical, reappeared as an augmented confidence in that whole intellectual position which he now was impatient to vindicate in a pitched battle with Dr. Thistlewood. Materialism no longer daunted him. He defied it with a renewed contempt.

In this mood he proceeded to write two letters. Any one who had watched him with eyes sufficiently keen, might have detected in his attitude at his writing table, and in the manner in which he held his pen, an air of mastery which had not been his before. One of his letters was to Miss Vivian—a letter tenderly reticent, in which he contented himself with saying that he would obey her wishes in everything. The other was to Dr. Thistlewood, and was couched in the following terms:—

"DEAR DR. THISTLEWOOD,

"I have acted on your advice, and for three days I have been away. I thank you for your books, and for Dr. Gonteau's notes, all of which I have read. I am sending these back by bearer; and if you will be in this morning, I should derive much satisfaction from re-discussing the whole matter with you. The bearer will wait for an answer.

"Yours,

"THEOPHILUS BARTON."

Mr. Barton, who was rarely at a loss for messengers, found no difficulty in despatching both his letters simultaneously. Dr. Thistlewood's answer reached him without delay.

"By all means come," it said. "I shall expect you by twelve o'clock."

CHAPTER VIII

"My dear Mr. Barton," said Dr. Thistlewood, when his visitor entered, "I congratulate you on your improved looks. You have read the notes and books, you say. I shall be interested to hear in what light you regard the situation now."

Mr. Barton had, when Dr. Thistlewood saw him last, been a man bowed and broken, trying vainly to hide from himself the spectacle of his own dismay. His face, indeed, was still haggard. But now his manner, though not free from anxiety, was almost aggressively self-assured; and there was in his demeanour a certain challenging sedateness, the precise meaning of which Dr. Thistlewood was at a loss to conjecture.

"It would be idle to pretend," said Mr. Barton, "that in respect of its personal bearings, Miss Vivian's case gives me less pain than you thought it would. It probably gives me more. So far, Dr. Thistlewood, I do not think I shall have disappointed you; but I don't want to dwell on matters the discussion of which would be useless. I want rather to show you that, in a general way, you and your friends make of a case like hers something far more formidable, for a believer like myself, than it is; and, most of all, I want to consult you about certain practical aspects of it, with regard to which I recognize you as an expert, and desire your most valuable advice."

"Practical advice," said Dr. Thistlewood, dryly, "is precisely what I want to give you."

"As for the general significance of the case, and of other cases like it," continued Mr. Barton, raising his eyebrows, "I believe I shall be able to show you, from the facts you have yourself submitted to me, that the kind of inference which you and your friends draw from them is, if you will pardon me for saying so, a huge intellectual mare's-nest."

"I shall be delighted," said Dr. Thistlewood, "to listen to your general arguments; but please remember this—that I have no wish to disturb, for the mere sake of disturbing them, any general beliefs of your own; and if I urge anything in opposition to what you may

be about to say, it will merely be for the sake of emphasizing certain practical advice, which I have been compelled to give you already. Indeed, the practical responsibilities which circumstances have conspired to lay on me, form my sole apology for intruding myself in your affairs. This being so, my entire attention is at your service. Put things in your own way, and I will give you my answers with frankness, though I am not inclined to be disputatious for the mere sake of disputing."

Mr. Barton drew himself up in his chair; he pressed the finger-tips of both hands together, and began to speak in a tone of almost supercilious authority.

"It would be arrogance on my part," he said, "to attempt a complete discussion of complicated physical happenings. I shall confine myself to three points, as to which the common-sense of one man is, I submit, as good as that of another. In the first place, then, you have yourself insisted, for my benefit, on the curious forms of hallucination produced by very ordinary fevers. Further, we all of us know that hallucinations are produced by madness. The Church has been familiar with both these classes of phenomena for nineteen hundred years; but the faith of the Church has not been thereby affected. I should be much surprised to find that you or your friends, if you were put to it, could draw any essential distinction between these changes—so called—of personality, and those mental disorders of which, any day of the week, you can find any number of examples in any one of our county asylums. There's my first point. Let me now come to my second; and here I must thank you for your candour, since you have yourself drawn my attention to the facts on which I am about to build. I mean the facts of the typical case of Félida. The Christian author of one of those works you lent me conclusively shows, from the very details which his opponents give him, that the so-called division of her personality was a superficial division only. Her fundamental and general memories, and all her main acquirements—the very roots of her intelligent self—were shared by all of the so-called selves in common, and were as much undivided as are yours and mine this morning. The very phrase, therefore, 'a divided self,' is in reality a misnomer. I suppose you follow me thus far?"

"Perfectly," said Dr. Thistlewood—"perfectly. And now let us have your third point."

"This," said Mr. Barton, "is in one sense the most important. It is closely connected with the others, and supports me in my theoretical inferences; but it is in itself practical. In these two elaborate monographs on the cases of Mr. Hanna and Miss B., I discovered one curious thing to which—I will not inquire why—you omitted to call my attention. For me it was far more significant

than anything is in those passages to which you advised me to confine myself. In both these books, with their endless, weary pages which chronicle minute differences between one so-called self and another, and which, I confess, I could do no more than skim—in both these books I came upon constant references, made by their respective authors, to some real or true self subsisting amongst the false or apparent ones. In each case it was the aim of the doctor-author to identify this true self, to fix it, and suppress the others; and in each case the doctor-author, so far as I could gather from a hasty reading, succeeded in his endeavour, and left the patient cured. So even these materialists, the moment they forget their theories, and address themselves honestly to their proper professional duties, come back, it seems, to the view which the humblest Christian holds in common, if you will let me say so, with the world's profoundest thinkers."

"If," said Dr. Thistlewood, when Mr. Barton came to a conclusion, "you wanted to start a general discussion with me as to the relations of Christian philosophy to what you call scientific materialism, I should be very happy to meet you, as soon as we could find the time which so great a task would require of us; but if, as I gather, your object is more precise—if your wish is to see your way quite clearly to certain conclusions, which will justify the continuance of your projects in connection with Miss Wynn Vivian—I don't mind taking your isolated arguments as you give them to me. Only, before I do this, let me put the plain question once more to you—do you, in the face of all that you have lately learned, persist in your desire to make this young lady your wife?"

"I am quite aware," said Mr. Barton, "that I have no claim on your valuable time other than that which your wish to oppose such a marriage gives me: and according to your own lights such a wish may have a sound foundation. For this reason I accept your question as a legitimate one; and therefore, Dr. Thistlewood, let me at once hasten to assure you that my intentions are utterly undisturbed by anything you have been able to tell me, and were never more resolute than they are at the present moment."

"Then in that case," said Dr. Thistlewood, "I will answer you in the way you wish. One of your points I should in any case be willing to discuss most thoroughly. I mean that which relates to the fact that the doctors, from whom you have just quoted, seem to look upon one out of several of the apparent selves as being more real than the others; and to the means adopted by them to render this self permanent. But your general arguments about madness, and about Félida's fundamental unity—these I would much sooner not try to pull to pieces, but leave you to draw from them what satisfaction you can."

"I, on the contrary," said Mr. Barton, "should be very much more satisfied by learning here and now what you can urge against them."

"Very well, then," said Dr. Thistlewood, "since you wish it I will obey your wishes. You began by urging that these so-called divided selves are nothing more than peculiar forms of madness. Have you taken the trouble to ask yourself what madness means? What we all of us mean by madness, as opposed to sanity, is a state in which reason, to a greater or less extent, loses its grasp of facts, and of the actual relations that subsist between the individual and the surrounding world. But in the cases with which we are now dealing such symptoms are entirely absent. If Danton, Voiron, Fourrier, Louise Desmoulins, were sane when they were in a state of grace—and they most undoubtedly were so—they were no less sane in their states of vice and crime. Louise, as a woman of the streets, was mentally far superior to Sister Martha of the Five Wounds. Miss Wynn is in all ways as sane, and in some more acute than Miss Vivian. So much for madness. And now, Mr. Barton, for the famous case of Félida. These cases of divided lives, of which Felida's is only one example, differ in their details from one another, just as cases do of an injured leg or arm. Sometimes the limb is dislocated, or almost severed from the trunk. At other times we have merely a simple fracture. Divided lives exhibit the same variety. In Felida's case it is quite true, as you say, that the different selves had a stock of acquirements in common. It was not necessary for each of them to teach itself to walk and read. But if you turn to the case of Mr. Hanna—I'm afraid that you can't have read very many of those pages which I marked for you—you will be startled by the presence of those precise conditions, over the absence of which in Félida's our clerical friend rejoices. Mr. Hanna's conscious self had, in its two phases, no common memories, no common stock of acquirements. The mind of Mr. Hanna the Second began as an absolute blank. Like a baby he could not speak. Like a baby he could not feed himself. What is still more remarkable, he had no idea of space. He thought the bedclothes were part of his own body. He only learnt what self, as opposed to the not-self, meant, by discovering gradually where his powers of movement ended; and when he had learnt to speak, and his intellect had reconstructed itself, his chief intellectual difficulty was understanding what was meant by God."

Mr. Barton was silent for a few moments. His face, as he listened, had betrayed a growing impatience.

"We look at these matters," he said, "from such different points of view, that discussion seems almost hopeless. A soul may lose its memories, as a balloon may lose its ballast. But the balloon is a balloon still. It is not the sand that soars."

"Then in that case," said Dr. Thistlewood, "what becomes of your argument? What you just now urged was this—that Félida's so-called many souls were shown to have been really one, because some of the same sand was used as ballast by all of them."

Mr. Barton bit his lip. "It's idle to talk," he said, "if we are to canter off on a metaphor. I should also, before I can discuss what you say, require you to give me details."

"Precisely," said Dr. Thistlewood. "That's what I set out with telling you. I told you that these things couldn't be discussed in a hurry. Had I time, I should ask you to consider, before we went any farther, what, in a moral sense, the idea of self means for you. I should point out to you that self means for a Christian, not the mere sense of an *ego* 'bombinans in vacuo.' It means character—a disposition of the heart. Otherwise it means nothing. I should point out to you also that, as M. Ribot very trenchantly says, the distinctive thing which changes in these changes of personality is precisely this moral disposition, without which, from a Christian point of view, a soul or a self is no more than a soap-bubble. But I can't do this in five minutes. If we must quarrel, let us quarrel at leisure. Meanwhile, if your speculative arguments still seem to you satisfactory, stick to them. Let them give you comfort, and let us—you and me—for the moment, instead of quarrelling, confine ourselves to an aspect of the matter with regard to which we are in some agreement. I mean the possibility in the present case—Miss Vivian's—of so strengthening and developing one of the two selves that it shall absorb, dispossess, or in any case permanently abolish the other."

"Very well, then," said Mr. Barton, not sorry to change his ground, "we will waive theory for the moment, and keep to the practical side of things, on which, to say the truth, rather than on the matters which your own notes suggested, I fixed my attention when I looked through those books you lent me. In both Miss B.'s case, and in Mr. Hanna's, the doctors adopted systematic methods of treatment, and brought back what they recognized as the true self into permanence."

"I suppose," said Dr. Thistlewood, "you had not time to consider very carefully what the methods were which they employed to bring about this result, such at hypnotism, sometimes induced with the aid of ether. You might perhaps not approve of them. Of this we can talk hereafter. You will be better pleased by learning that reunification has been sometimes obtained spontaneously—by an improvement in the patient's health, by a favourable modification of circumstances, and the development of stable and appropriately stimulating interests. The girl Barnes, who split up into ten different lives, each with its own memories, finally settled down into that

which was sixth in order of appearance. She married, became a useful young woman, and followed the profession of a typewriter, her cure having worked itself out altogether unaided by any artificial treatment."

"Well," said Mr. Barton, "here we have a practical course with regard to which we shall be in harmony. If I can, in Miss Vivian's case, help, by following your advice, to bring about this result, you will find me all obedience. Let us get the result, and you may trust me to put my own interpretation on it."

"I think," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that possibly, though not certainly, the continued improvement of Miss Vivian's bodily health might really result in a stable unification of her lives. Even so, consequences might arise for which you are not prepared, but we need not consider these until we have observed her farther. I may say, meanwhile, that her present condition is promising. I have had better opportunities than you have had for forming an opinion about that. Since the evening on which she realized that a certain romance was hopeless, and exchanged the agitation of suspense for the comparative calm of disappointment, her general condition has, I think, much improved. Nothing troubles her but the persistence of vivid dreams—dreams of inanimate objects, such as a railway station, which seem to force themselves meaninglessly on her eyes, and which sometimes make her sleep a worry rather than a rest. At her aunt's suggestion she came to consult me this morning about an hour before your own arrival. I thought her better, in a general way, than I have done since my first acquaintance with her. Still, this morning she seemed tired—I gather that she had been at church—so I gave her something that would put her to sleep for an hour or so. She is in the house at this moment. In another five minutes she will be awake. Her aunt will be here for luncheon, and is going to take her home afterwards. I should suggest that you stayed, and make your own observations for yourself. If only," he reflected, "the young lady will show herself sufficiently indifferent, she will take my business off my hands, and our clergyman may feel as he pleases."

A rapid flush spread itself over Mr. Barton's face. The image of Miss Vivian as she knelt in church came back to him, and the look of her sacred letter, against which his heart was at that moment beating. He assented to Dr. Thistlewood's suggestion with a coldness which was pleasure under a thin disguise. He began to consider whether his own letter would have reached her before she started for the Turkish Castle. He felt convinced that it would, so that when they met they would understand each other.

Lord Cotswold, as usual, received him with a gracious friendliness, and he, too, like Dr. Thistlewood, detected in the priest's

demeanour, subdued and grave as it was, some subtle and elusive self-confidence which had not been there before. This impression was fugitive, but a few minutes later it was renewed. When Lady Susannah arrived, she looked at Mr. Barton with a glance, so Lord Cotswold noticed, of half-shy questioning curiosity; and Mr. Barton, by a slight stiffness in his greeting to her, seemed to be withdrawing himself from the reach of any confidential catechizing. Then the door opened again, and at last Miss Vivian entered. She was the same as ever, and yet not the same. The soft and equable self-possession which had distinguished her at Lord Cotswold's dinner party, and had then given place to an artificial frivolity, had developed itself. It shone in the quiet of her eyes, and expressed itself in the character of her dress. She was usually addicted to striking, though always delicate colours. This morning, from her hat to her shoes, everything was a dove-like grey. Perfect as this toilette was from a dressmaker's point of view, it seemed to Mr. Barton to be a sanctification rather than an adornment. Dr. Thistlewood watched to see how she and Mr. Barton met each other. They bowed and just touched each other's hands. Then they moved apart. Dr. Thistlewood noted their distant demeanour with satisfaction, till he saw that it was followed by a glance of mutual understanding, which caused him to reflect impatiently on the incalculable ways of women.

At luncheon the two sat opposite to each other. Dr. Thistlewood watched them still. The result of his observation became, as time went on, less and less satisfactory, and more and more perplexing to him. As for Mr. Barton, his continued reserve was remarkable. Of that glance which Dr. Thistlewood had intercepted he attempted no repetition. He rarely even looked at the girl, nor did he often address her. Miss Vivian's eyes, on the contrary—so Dr. Thistlewood perceived—rested on Mr. Barton, not indeed in a way which would have attracted ordinary observation, but nevertheless with a curiously systematic frequency, and their expression was one which, to the best of his recollection, he had never noticed in a woman's eyes before. It betokened a sense of hope, mixed with some profound repose. To Dr. Thistlewood himself, however, as well as to her aunt and Lord Cotswold, her manner had a suave composure, which was always ready on occasion to take the form of a passing but wholly unforced gaiety.

"Here is something going on," thought Dr. Thistlewood to himself, "much more serious than I had anticipated. This man has bewitched her. If I don't look out, the fat will be in the fire in no time. I'm glad to see," he said, turning to the girl rather sharply, "that your nap has done you good. I hope that what you call your morning dreams did not presume to molest you on the sofa after midday."

Miss Vivian laughed. "No," she said. "I suppose they respected the witching hour of noon."

"May I ask," said Mr. Barton, for the first time starting a subject, and speaking as though the matter were one of purely impersonal interest, "how dreams in the morning differ from dreams at any other time?"

"Yes," said Lord Cotswold, "let us hear about this. I've just been reading a book in which the writer attempts to divide dreams into classes. What do you say? Who's there?" This was addressed to a servant. "Certainly. Lay another place. Yes, my dear young lady, you were saying—or rather you weren't saying, but we all want you to say—what distinction you would draw between dreams yourself. Ah—this is an unexpected pleasure. We were just talking about dreams. I hope this is a reality."

Lord Cotswold had risen from his seat, and was grasping the hand of a lady, whose clear, incisive voice would have cut any dream in two.

"Whatever else I may be," said Lady Conway—for the newcomer was she—"I was always a model mother, and I've come back to see my child. At this moment she is lunching on a patent preparation of gruel, and I've fled from a dish of mutton-chops which was prepared for my own consumption. My dear," she went on, turning to Miss Vivian, "what's happened to you? One would have thought you'd come from heaven, if your clothes hadn't come from Paris. Ah, Mr. Barton, I saw your name last night in a paper which is not, as a rule, much occupied with clerical news. I hope that what I read may be true, and that the world may be allowed to offer its very humble congratulations to the Church. What! Has nobody heard? Mr. Barton, I must reintroduce you, as the deserving successor to one of the largest fortunes in Ireland. We shall be having you for a bishop soon."

"I did hear," said Lady Susannah, "though I didn't hear any details, a sort of rumour about something of the kind last night."

Dr. Thistlewood looked at her. Her eyes, in their own way, were an object of study not less curious than Miss Vivian's, but they were much easier to read. Dr. Thistlewood read them like a book. They were turned towards Mr. Barton with a light of intimate and yet shy congratulation in them; and Dr. Thistlewood knew that in the mind of this simplest and most unworldly of women Mr. Barton had, as a suitor for Miss Vivian's hand, acquired a desirability and importance which he hitherto had not possessed. Dr. Thistlewood smiled a little grimly. Then he frowned.

"This will never do," he muttered. "Things are growing worse and worse."

Mr. Barton somewhat relieved him by courageously changing the conversation.

"We were talking just now," he said, "about a subject very much more interesting. Miss Vivian was telling us that her morning dreams were more tiring than any others; and Lord Cotswold was asking her how the two kinds differed."

Miss Vivian, being accordingly pressed to go on with her explanations, did so with perfect simplicity, though the matter in question was not, she said, worth making a fuss about. The morning dreams, she continued, the peculiar dreams that annoyed her, differed from other dreams, because they were so much more vivid, and at the same time so much more stupid.

"For instance," she said, "I dream sometimes of a row of bottles, rather like Mr. Hugo's, only they are cleaner, and I can't get rid of the sight of them. They stay before me like a bright picture. And sometimes I see, in the same tiresome way, an odd kind of stone hut, like a dwarf's hut in a fairy story, or a churchyard, very ill kept, and full of absurd monuments; and, worse still, I am constantly seeing railway stations, or rather bits of them, and they have absurd names. I have often seen one called Pog, and another one called Kethar. Dr. Thistlewood was so flattering as to take my reminiscences down. But there's nothing in these dreams except their extraordinary clearness and a sort of perverse commonness to make them anything out of the way. They make me feel, when I am asleep, as if a lamp was being waved to and fro before my eyes."

"My dear," said Lady Conway, "you have given us a most brilliant description. If you could only teach me to see railway stations—not Pog and Kethar, but Euston—as clearly and pertinaciously as you do, I might perhaps beat the police, and discover who stole my jewel-case. Well, and how is our Rawlin?"

Dr. Thistlewood glanced at Miss Vivian, and adroitly upset his wine-glass with a view to checking the introduction of so indiscreet a topic; but Lord Cotswold having risen at that moment, a general movement followed which rendered this step superfluous.

"Nest," said Lady Susannah, "I ordered the carriage early. I hear that it's just come. No, Lord Cotswold, no—we really mustn't wait for coffee. I have an engagement, and shall be rather late as it is. Nest, my dear, what's become of you?"

What had become of her was this. With a placid directness of movement, as soon as the party rose, she had approached Mr. Barton, she had drawn him a little aside, and looking up at him with an expression of earnest confidence, she was saying to him something or other which was evidently of deep importance.

Mr. Barton bent his head to listen. Then he inclined it farther.

Otherwise he gave no sign. Miss Vivian and he then parted without the semblance of any ordinary leave-taking.

"My dear Mr. Barton," said Lady Conway, when Miss Vivian and her aunt had departed, "I hope I did not do wrong in congratulating you on your good fortune. I was certainly betraying no secrets, for I saw the news in an article called 'Social Doings in Ireland.' What the English Church wants is consistent men like yourself, who have the material means for giving effect to their convictions."

Mr. Barton bowed. The thought expressed by Lady Conway had already mixed itself with his own special hopes and troubles.

"Well," Lady Conway continued, as she turned round to Lord Cotswold, "I'm glad that dear Susie has got her Miss Nest back again. If half that I've heard lately of the other young lady is true, she had made even Nice a good deal too hot to hold her."

Dr. Thistlewood looked again at Mr. Barton. He was biting his lip, and for a moment, but for a moment only, his features contracted into an expression of sharp pain. Then he recovered his equanimity, and observing that his engagements would prevent his remaining longer, made his adieux with a courtesy which was almost stately in its grave reserve.

"I may shortly," he said to Dr. Thistlewood, "be able to renew our conversation with a fuller knowledge of the circumstances than that which I possess at present."

"What," Dr. Thistlewood asked himself, "could Miss Vivian have just now said to him?"

What Miss Vivian had said was this. "I am sure of myself now, as I was not when I wrote that note. I now know what you meant all along when you used to talk to me. Try to come and see me to-morrow. To-night I will write again. All I want now is to tell you everything—everything."

"Mr. Barton," said Lady Conway to Lord Cotswold as soon as the priest had gone, "takes his good fortune very much like a saint and a gentleman. I'm sure he would like, if he could, to spend his thousands on faggots to burn the people who are wicked enough to disagree with him. As for the young lady—Dr. Gustav, did you observe her? I always told Rawlin that the young lady would go far. She seems to have discovered in advance on which side her bread is buttered."

CHAPTER IX

THREE days had elapsed since Mr. Barton and Miss Vivian had, with such obvious intimacy, and yet with such ostentatious aloofness, parted in Lord Cotswold's dining-room. Dr. Thistlewood then made the following entry in a note-book which bore on various pages Mr. Barton's name already :—

"This man interests me more and more. Mr. B. is a typical specimen of human nature as submitted to two influences which rarely affect the same subject simultaneously in such close connection —namely, those of religious faith and intense personal affection, both reacting on facts calculated to destroy both.

"The heart of all living faith is, and always has been, an emotional and indefinite perception of some profound and practical truth; but this is a kind of truth which, for the great mass of mankind, can be practical only when invested with some form which is definite; and it can be invested with such a form by means of symbols only, which symbols are myths, or philosophies having myths for their basis. Hence, all believers, as we call them, in proportion to the practical efficiency with which the truth is perceived by them, identify the truth itself with the symbolic conceptions or assertions through which alone for them it achieves definiteness. Accordingly, if external facts which conflict with these myths are obtruded on them they feel that a certainty which is external is being pitted against a deeper certainty which is internal; and this latter certainty so far prevails that any theory is accepted by them, no matter how untenable, by which such facts may be deprived of their hostile significance; or else may be so obscured that they cease to signify anything.

"Such is the case when faith alone is at issue. In the case of Mr. B. we have a vehement personal affection of a curiously exalted kind, adding to the obstinacy of faith another which is even more vivacious. He recognizes the hostile facts. He would doubtless deny them, if he could, but he cannot. Their virus is in his veins. He has, moreover, quite sufficient intelligence to see how portentous, from his own point of view, their natural implications are. And yet already, by means of all sorts of random reasonings,

each of which contradicts the others, he has almost persuaded himself that, whatever the real meaning of these facts may be, they cannot mean anything inconsistent with the demands of his passion as a lover, and that Janus-faced passion, incorporated with this, of the believer, which shows itself on the one side as a prostration before the divine Saviour, and on the other as the bitterest of all contempts and hatreds—namely, that which directs itself against those by whom such conceptions as his of the Saviour's work are questioned. Let his arguments be as bad as they may be, these two passions, the divine and the human, give life to them—passions which are a curious compound of insight and of savage blindness.

"I had hoped that my own practical difficulties with Mr. B. might have been solved by the young lady's preoccupation with the idea of Sir R. S.; but after what I saw the other day, it has seemed to me more than probable that her sentiments may, by a well-known kind of reaction, have transferred themselves from a lover of one kind to a lover of quite another. Should this prove to be the case, this wretched obstinate man will drive me to do what, for everybody's sake, I would avoid. I had expected, having seen the manner in which they parted after luncheon, that Mr. B. would have come to me within four and twenty hours, to tell me a tale of mutual passion and rapture, of bridal altars and the rest of it. But no. In three days I have heard nothing from him. What can be the reason of this? He will give me trouble still."

If, instead of judging by merely external signs, Dr. Thistlewood could have looked into Mr. Barton's heart at the moment to which those remarks referred, he would have exchanged his state of conjecture for one of moral certainty. That overwhelming and appeasing happiness, the prospect of which, when first brought near to the lover, had proved to be a cruel delusion, and having raised his hopes so high, and having made a new man of him, had vanished, abasing him in the depths of amazed sorrow, had now recreated itself, and, resting on a new foundation, seemed at last on the point of becoming a supreme reality.

Late in the evening of that same momentous day, the expected word had reached him, summoning him to Miss Vivian's side. It came not from Miss Vivian herself, but from her aunt, writing on her behalf. Here, he felt, was solid evidence that there was no delusion now.

"DEAR MR. BARTON" (Lady Susannah wrote),

"Nest tells me that, at her own request, you are coming again to talk to her. She wants it to be to-morrow. This is a great relief to me. If there was ever anything wrong, I do hope that your coming will make things right for both of you. I am glad for your own sake to hear about your great inheritance. No one could know

better than a person so nobly disinterested as yourself how to use wealth wisely. I hope that we, as a family, may have the right to be very proud of you some day. Will five o'clock suit you? I will arrange that you shall go to Nest's own sitting-room, for in my little nook near the door there has been a fall of soot, and everything will be covered up with sheets, as a preparation for the chimney-sweeps. Unless we hear to the contrary before twelve to-morrow, Nest will be waiting for you at five."

Mr. Barton, at the hour appointed, entered the sacred chamber. His heart beat tumultuously. A lump rose in his throat. When Miss Vivian greeted him, the words which he tried to form were no more than a hoarse whisper. Neither of them made any show of extending a hand to the other; but looks and signs were exchanged in accordance with which they seated themselves, a table being interposed between them.

"I thank you so much for coming," Miss Vivian said at last. "Will you let me begin, and put things in my own way?"

Her voice was charged with feeling; but, unlike Mr. Barton's, it was under her complete control, and her manner was strangely equable, giving no hint of nervousness. Mr. Barton, by a movement of his head, signified his desire that she should proceed.

"I want you, then," she began, "to see me with a good light on me, as photographers would say, so as to assure yourself that I am looking well. I do look well, don't you think so? I look and I am talking like a person who is healthy and wide awake, and has all her wits about her? I never in my life felt more matter-of-fact, or less of a dreamer than I do at this moment. Wait a second. Let me take away that bowl of flowers. It prevents my seeing you properly. Come, I should like you to tell me that I make a proper healthy impression on you. I'm not saying this for talking's sake. I want a genuine candid answer."

Mr. Barton had no difficulty in giving her the assurance for which she asked. No one who saw and listened to her could possibly have done otherwise.

"That's right," she said with a smile of half playful relief. "Now I can speak with confidence. I am going to speak to you about things to which my eyes have been opened partly by your aid—things in relation to which, as you yourself once said to me—it was that day, after luncheon, when we walked together along the cliffs—nothing can come between us."

Her face, with its setting of delicately arranged hair, though it could not divest itself of the magic of its lurking piquancies, was so transfigured as to suggest to Mr. Barton's mind a memorable line of Byron's—"All youth, but with an aspect beyond time."

"I want you," Miss Vivian proceeded, in a low but unhesitating tones, "to know me as I know myself. Let me tell you something about my childhood. I believe I used often to be ill, and there's much that I am confused about, and can't very well remember. But some things stand out as clearly as if they had happened yesterday. I mean things which happened, or which seemed to happen, sometimes in church, and sometimes in my own room. When I had said my prayers, or was thinking about them afterwards, I used sometimes to fancy that I saw our Lord standing before me, and once or twice the Blessed Virgin. They never spoke, but they would smile at me in a way that gave me confidence; and if I was in trouble because I had lost something, they would by a look or movement show me where to find it. Now I don't think any longer, whatever I may have thought once, that these figures were what one would call realities. I have reasons for knowing that they were not. In one sense they were fancies. But would you say that they were fancies which were merely morbid, which came to me because I was not well? Or would you think it possible that they were signs which meant that I was near, or was getting nearer, to what I seemed to see so clearly?"

Mr. Barton changed his position. He turned his face away from her, and before he pronounced an answer, he pondered with contracted brows.

"No doubt," he said at last, "visions of the kind you speak of—all sound theologians are, I think, of this opinion—have been due again and again to the operation of evil spirits, who have sought to betray the humble by filling them with a false pride. I feel convinced, however, from the way in which you speak of the matter, that this could not have been so with you."

"I'm sure," said Miss Vivian, "that these things produced no pride in myself. But I'll tell you what they did do. They made prayer and religion too little of a self-denial, and too much of a self-indulgence."

Mr. Barton smiled. "Who has been frightening you?" he replied, "with such ideas as these? When our Lord said, 'Suffer the little children to come to me,' do you think he meant their coming to be painful? Do you ask me about this—I hope that such may be the case—because you are finding at the present time that the act of prayer is becoming more easy and spontaneous than it once was?"

"Yes," said Miss Vivian quietly. "That is more or less my meaning."

She stopped abruptly, and both of them were for some time silent.

At last Mr. Barton said, "In speaking just now of the visions

seen by you in your childhood, you hinted that at one time you perhaps took them for realities, but that you have recently—quite recently, I so understood from your manner—had reasons for assuring yourself that they did not possess that character. What touchstone have you found which enables you to reach an opinion of this very decided kind?"

"That," said Miss Vivian, "is the point to which I have been leading up. I wanted to feel sure that you wouldn't laugh at me, or think me mad. Mr. Barton, listen. I know that those early visions were not actual external things, because I have seen since then other visions which were so."

She uttered these words slowly and very gravely, but she uttered them with the quiet of one who, troubled by no doubt, finds all emphasis superfluous.

Mr. Barton drew a sharp breath. A new world of wonders, for him essentially credible, was opening its abyss before him. He did not speak, but a look from him besought her to continue.

"I am telling you all this," she resumed, with the same self-possessed solemnity, "not because I want to ask you whether these things which I have seen were fancies. I know that they were not, just as surely as I know that this room is not a fancy. I am telling you because I want you to stand over me, or by my side, and help me along that way on which you have travelled so far yourself, and which now must be mine also. And I come to you not only because I have known your sympathy in the past, but also because you have been pointed out to me, in a way of which I will tell you presently, as the friend who will sustain and help me. Do you think, if I were not certain of my facts, that I should venture to talk like this to you?"

"Tell me," said Mr. Barton in a low quivering voice, as though he were in the presence of some divine vision himself, "what these visions were, and when, and in what place they appeared to you."

"They appeared to me in church," she said; "not during any service, but when I was alone there, as I have been, early in the morning each of these last few days. I felt that something was coming. I was dimly conscious of the direction in which I was being drawn and guided, and at last—well, I can only say that this wonderful thing happened. But wonderful as it was, it somehow did not surprise me. It merely seemed to complete something, like a rose unfolding from its bud. I had been kneeling in church for half an hour or so, not praying exactly, but thinking things over, and feeling them—letting them grow into me. They were the sort of things of which your own book, 'The Secret Way,' is full, and of which you talked to me when we walked that afternoon along the cliffs together—the world beyond the world, the star beyond the star, the heart of hearts, the better country which the ships will never

reach, but to which they seem to beckon us. And then I opened my eyes, and my eyes fixed themselves on the altar, and I thought of how He, who is the heart of all this inward world, condescends to come to us there in His actual bodily form, though its beauty is there veiled, and how He offers to those who seek Him a refuge from all loss. And as I was doing this the chancel became vague, but I still saw the lamp that hangs in it. It was a spot of extreme brightness. I remember this vividly. And then this brightness disappeared, and gave place to another which seemed to have come forwards, so that it was like a white cloud which I could have touched had I held my hand out; and the next thing I knew was that our Lord Himself stood before me, and no veil hid Him now. His form, Mr. Barton, was just as clear as yours is. I could take in every detail. His dress was white and loose; and there were two lines bordering it, one gold and one red, like a piece of braid. And He stooped towards me, and He just touched my chin so as to raise my head a little, and make me look Him full in the eyes, and He said to me, 'I know you love me. Do you love me well enough to become altogether mine?' And I must have said 'Yes,' though I don't know how I said it. And then He opened His robe, and I saw His sacred breast, and a face was painted on it so perfectly that it seemed like a real face reposing there; and it was yours. And our Lord said to me, 'Are you willing to rest where he rests?' And I said 'Yes,' as before, and He said, 'Then I will give you my guidance, and show you how this may be.'"

"Go on," said Mr. Barton. "You spoke of visions. Was this followed by another?"

"Yes," she replied. "The second vision came next morning, in the same place. You are taking me seriously, aren't you? You are not laughing?"

"If I could laugh at all," said Mr. Barton, "I should laugh at that foolish question of yours. My face is an open book to you. Read it for yourself and see."

For a certain number of seconds the priest and the girl looked at each other. When a pure man, to whom love first reveals itself in his maturity, and who, contrary to the habits of a lifetime, has felt the unbelievable pressure of a woman's lips on his, her lips can never be to him the thing that they were before. They are the rim of a vessel in which the spiritual wine is tendered to him, and the wine will not quench his thirst till he has touched those lips again. Spiritual beings, with a fluttering of dove-like wings, were, so it seemed to Mr. Barton, thickening in the air around him, and drawing Miss Vivian and himself together in the tabernacle of their brooding plumes. But his moment was not yet come. It was coming; but he still must wait a while.

"My child," he said, lowering his eyelids, "go on, if you think me worthy. But I must not continue looking at you—I mean not yet—not yet. Well—the second vision—it came, and it gave you the guidance promised."

"Yes," said Miss Vivian, "and I am bringing its message to you, so as to be assured that I have understood it rightly. As I said just now, this second vision came to me in the church also. It came yesterday morning. It, too, began with a brightness which seemed to originate in the neighbourhood of the hanging lamp, and which soon afterwards was as near to me as the next row of chairs. And then this soft cloud went, and instead of it was the Blessed Virgin. And her dress was blue, like the deepest blueness of the sky, and her hands were white like lilies, and the hearts of all women seemed to be melting in her eyes. And she said to me, 'Nest Vivian, your heart has been tried by the love of what you never could have made your own. It has been tried thus so that you might be drawn towards another object which can be made your own entirely. My Son loves you, and I know that you love my Son, and He has sent me to tell you how you may be worthy of His most close embrace. If you would be worthy of my Son, you must do what, by some of those nearest to you, will be accounted foolishness, but there is one whose head reposes on my Son's breast, and he will protect and lead you, making hard things easy, and you and he shall be with my Son together.'"

Mr. Barton bowed his head. One tense hand was pressed against his closed eyes. The supreme revelation was, he felt, to be made at last, and he and she would then be in each others' arms.

Miss Vivian's voice, previously quite tranquil, had begun to tremble, not much, but perceptibly, and she had paused as though to recover her self-possession.

"Well, Mr. Barton," she resumed, "the Blessed Virgin went on in this way. 'Nest Vivian,' she said, 'raise your eyes to mine. You know the title by which the Church calls me, and you know what that title means. If you would be worthy of my Son, you must be and you must remain as I am; and you must join the company of those—made sisters by most sweet vows—who have given themselves to the Sacred Heart, and have no lover and no bridegroom except Christ.' And then she kissed me on the forehead, and I was alone again in the empty church, and the words 'Sacred Heart' were still sounding in my ears; and I knew that what she had said to me was the unsealing of my own inmost thought. You, who have been given to me for my guide, you must now help me. There is no need for haste," she went on with a smile; "or for rushing things. When people are certain, they can easily afford to wait, and there must be

a convent which will take me like that of which Our Lady spoke. That's the sort of thing which you know, or which you will find out for me, and your judgment shall be my guide. Ah, Mr. Barton, I shall no longer make you anxious by seeming too fond of balls; and that, if you still care for me, will, I fancy, be a great relief to you. Why do you look like that? Your face seems as though it had turned to marble. Do you think that I have taken myself in? Do you think that I am too presumptuous? Do you think that our Lord never appears to anybody?"

Mr. Barton had risen to his feet. The fashion of his countenance, as she said, had indeed undergone a change. With a hasty movement of his hand he enjoined her not to speak, and he seemed to experience a difficulty in finding his own voice.

"God forbid," he said, "that such unbelief should be mine. Just now you uttered words of wisdom. There is no need for haste. Were you less dear to me than you are, I might find a readier answer. Nest Vivian, you do not know what you have done. You have confronted me with a problem so profound that as yet I cannot see to the bottom of it. I must think it over in a solitude so solitary that you can hardly imagine its desolation. Before I go, give me some sign of your recognition that, if I am slow in giving you any judgment, it is for your sake—it is for your sake that I am slow."

He stood facing her. He made no movement with his arms, but his hands were opened towards her in a mute and forlorn appeal. It was an appeal which took her by surprise, but she divined its immediate import, and she could not resist it, though what lay behind it was a riddle to her. She approached him frankly and gravely, she made the gesture for which he hungered, and one hand of hers gave itself to each of his.

"You don't, then, think me presumptuous? And you won't desert me on my pilgrimage?"

She put the questions submissively, and yet with a regained confidence, her hands meanwhile being still in his close grip. It was all he could do to restrain himself from throwing his arms round her. As a matter of fact he maintained a rigid, though not a forbidding aloofness, and said to her solemnly—

"When God bestows on any one any very signal favour, she or he who receives it must not expect to understand it without long and careful thought. The Blessed Virgin had to ponder long herself before the true nature of her own blessedness dawned on her. St. Teresa brought her visions to her confessor, and scrupulously sought his counsel before she allowed herself any assurance as to what they really meant. Of you, then, I ask that, for a time you should reverently suspend your judgment, and that meanwhile you

should pray and meditate, and examine calmly the very recesses of your own heart; and I, for my part, will pray and meditate likewise, and examine all sides of the question. Then, but not till then, my judgment may venture to aid yours. When that time comes," he added, dropping her hands, "may God himself judge between me and you. I, my child, I have had my visions also, and I have suffered in them things concerning you."

CHAPTER X

LATE in the afternoon next day, Mr. Barton was once more a caller on Dr. Thistlewood. The interview was short. Dr. Thistlewood recorded it thus:—

"Mr. Barton has reappeared at last. He was here for about ten minutes. He was certainly not triumphant. He has not gone, and seen, and conquered. I saw no orange-flowers in his eyes. On the other hand, he was not crushed. He looked harassed, but harassed as a man is who has some plan before him. I have never seen him in precisely this mood before. What he wants now to discuss with me calmly and carefully is the extent to which the vile body (as he no doubt still calls it) can impose its own maladies on the operations of the transcendental soul. Whether what he has in view is the unification of that indivisible unit, the soul of Miss Wynn Vivian, I do not know. But I think it is something else. He seems in some mysterious way to have gone off at a tangent. I suggested that, if he wanted a general discussion of the matter, we should ask Lord C. to take part in it. To my surprise he assented. Possibly he thinks that the presence of a third person will shield him from questions on my part as to what he is really up to. Anyhow, he has his wits about him; for, in order to account to Lord C. for this outburst of scientific curiosity, he has begged that Lord C. may be informed by me of the two following facts: that Mr. B., having begun to prepare Miss V. for Confirmation, has been perplexed by discovering her to have received that sacrament already; and further, that there has lately occurred amongst his own intimate acquaintances, one of those curious cases of a conscious self divided, the news of which has greatly shocked him. Everything has been arranged. I have told Lord C. of these facts. He is interested, as I knew he would be. Mr. B. dines here to-morrow.

"Whatever has in reality been happening to Mr. B., Miss N. V. at all events appears to be fairly satisfied. Yesterday I had a note from her. Nothing troubles her, she repeats, except those morning dreams of hers. If they do not soon cease, she would like to see me again. Hypnosis will be probably the remedy, as it is with

Sarah Davis. I may perhaps learn something through it, just as I have done in Miss Wynn's case, and as other doctors have done when dealing with similar patients.

"I look forward with curiosity to to-morrow, when Mr. B. is to come to us in the capacity of scientific inquirer."

An observation occurs in the Memoirs of an obscure writer to the effect that a sorrow or anxiety, its cause still persisting, can for a time be completely cured by another, different in kind and more directly poignant. "My financial losses," he says, "my own faulty extravagance, and my terrible inability to meet my just obligations, were a load on my back all day, and when I slept they were a nightmare; but when, having loved Margaret, and believed that she loved me, I was led to doubt whether this love continued, my debts ceased to exist for me. I lived in this new pain only. As for the others, I could hardly so much as recollect them. But when my doubts of Margaret ended, and the aching of my heart was eased, the load of my debts came back to me, and I soon found myself wondering how any one thus loaded could possibly have patience for so idle a thing as love-making."

Mr. Barton's experiences, ever since that sacred morning when he had seen Miss Vivian in church, and afterwards received her letter, had offered a parallel to the experience chronicled in this brief passage. The presence of his intellectual perplexities was expelled altogether from his consciousness, first by the rapture, and then by the absorbing pain which he experienced successively as the adoring and the despairing lover. This new pain was more profound, because it was more concentrated, than that caused by his first disappointment and the terrifying revelations attendant on it; but it was more easily borne; for, in the present case, unlike the former, there was nothing to disturb the foundations of his spiritual fortitude. It was, on the contrary, stimulated by the call of the great sorrow which bade it, in the name of Christ, to come forth and display itself. Mr. Barton had not walked with his Lord for nothing. He had felt in his meditations the cross on his own shoulders. He was familiar with the meaning of the great word "Renuntio," and he had often solemnly wondered when, if ever, the supreme summons would come to him to pronounce that word on his own account. Had that summons come now? And was this indeed to be the form of it, that he should tear from his heart all hopes of making humanly his own that life which the Lord himself had committed to his special keeping? With an effort he placed his hopes in the hands of his divine Master, and prepared himself to face the desert across which, it well might be, all his journey would lie between that hour and his last.

Such was his mood for hours after leaving Miss Vivian's presence

—after seeing her snatched away from him, in a manner beyond all his calculations, by those very faiths and longings which he had trusted would have joined him and her together. Mr. Barton, though accustomed to visualize the objects of his religious meditation, had never seen a vision himself to which he could attribute any real or objective existence: but that such visions were vouchsafed to saints, and others among the highly favoured, he never for a moment doubted: nor did he dare to dismiss lightly those seen by Miss Vivian. What he allowed himself to doubt about was not their reality, but their interpretation. If their obvious meaning was their true meaning, then his earthly hopes were over.

But late that night a sudden illumination came to him. If those visions meant what they seemed to mean, they did not merely mean that Miss Vivian should devote herself to the life of the convent. They meant—as was shown by the allusion to the "Sacred Heart" —that the Order which she entered should be Roman and not Anglican. They meant that she should quit that fold in which her Lord had placed her—that she should repudiate it, and seek another. Was it possible that her Lord had actually sent His Mother to her, for the special purpose of conveying to her a command like this? Such a question an Anglican priest could answer in one way only. Round Mr. Barton's head, as he took these thoughts to bed with him, the image of Miss Vivian hovered, beseeching him not to leave her, until no doubt as to the things belonging to her peace remained.

When he rose from his bed next morning his eyes had some new purpose in them, and his breakfast was no sooner despatched than he sought out certain volumes which occupied a portion of his shelves not often disturbed. They were volumes which dealt with the subject of visions, true and false; and for many hours he was examining the treatise of a Spanish theologian on the various tests by which the true and the false might be discriminated, and more especially on the several varieties of the latter, some of which were said to be due to the ingenuity of evil spirits, some to a perverse activity in the mind of the visionary himself, and which constituted a danger from which saints even were not exempt. There was one section of the discourse which he re-read more than once. The title was "De Visionibus que naturalibus causis tribuenda sunt." He had just placed a marker between the pages of this, when he started to pay that short visit at the Turkish Castle which, as Dr. Thistlewood set down in his notes, resulted in an engagement to return there the following night for dinner, with the strange object of learning whether physical science after all might not throw some light on the things of the transcendental spirit.

CHAPTER XI

Lord Cotswold, when the time came, at once put Mr. Barton at his ease, by expressing his pleasure in the prospect of some farther speculative discussion with one whose point of view was in many ways so different from his own.

"My interest," he added, as the trio sat down to dinner, "is increased by learning that two curious cases, which belong to the region lying between matter and spirit, have been brought under your own notice, and have prompted you to consider what they mean in relation to your own philosophy."

Mr. Barton, who, though completely unconscious of the fact, sat in his chair and laid his arm on the table, with a subtle air of consequence suggesting the man of property, was determined, before going farther, to put everybody in his proper place.

"In a general way," he said, whilst his hand trifled condescendingly with a wine-glass, "I am aware of the interpretation put on cases of this kind by yourself; so I ought to start with telling you that any such interpretation for me—pardon the expression—is an absurdity, or has an absurdity at the root of it. The question for me is, not what these maladies signify, but how far they extend. And here, in spite of our differences, there is much as to which we are in agreement. However separate the soul may be from the body, the body is, in this life, the medium through which the soul acts and reveals itself. I grant that this is true of its inward as well as of its outward actions—of introspection, as well as of speech and conduct; and just as a person who suffers from aphasia, which is admittedly a physical, not a mental affliction, fails to convey his true thoughts to another, so may the soul, owing to causes equally physical, fail to present true thoughts to itself. I should incline, in fact, to represent the brain as a glass, through which, under normal conditions, the soul sees as through a window; but which, like the sheets of glass used by conjurers on the stage, acts on occasion not like a window but a mirror, bewildering the soul with the spectacle of what seem to be actual objects, but are in reality reflections of its own ideas. Here, I should say, we have the origin—to take an

extreme case—of those false visions which, as all theologians admit, even saints at times have been in danger of mistaking for true ones. My own view here may differ from yours in some respects, but we are both concerned with the same order of facts; and it would interest me much to learn, as a practical man, within what limits these hallucinations develop themselves, and with what physical conditions scientific observers connect them. This is what I desire far more than a controversy over first principles; but still, if you would care to spy out what you and Dr. Thistlewood would regard as the nakedness of a priest's soul, so be it. I am at your disposal. Let us take first principles first."

"We did," said Lord Cotswold, "not so very long ago, have a little skirmish about these; or, at least, we sounded our trumpets. But the conditions then were unequal, and thus far they are so still. We know your position, but what do you know of ours? You seem to think that it is represented by a modern paraphrase of Lucretius. Let Dr. Gustav and me put our heads together, and try to do it more justice."

Mr. Barton assented, the spirit of battle rising in him. "Perhaps," he said, "my words the other night may have sounded unduly crude; but, if you come to the essence of things, I am still prepared to maintain that the materialism of to-day has not advanced a step beyond the old Lucretian paradox. Express it as you will, you have this assumption at the bottom of it—that life can and does result from a collocation of lifeless and originally independent particles; the corollary being that, since matter was before mind, mind played no part in the process which was the condition of its own development. The parent process, in other words, was fortuitous. Sense came out of nonsense. Well, Lord Cotswold, till you can induce me to believe this, the first principles of materialism, whether modern or otherwise, are, I fear, outside the pale of what for me is reasonable discussion. Still, if you wish it, I can listen. I am prepared to be a target for your own and Dr. Thistlewood's arrows."

"Mr. Barton," said Dr. Thistlewood, half laughing, "I could see that the challenge in your eyes, when you talked about fortuitous particles, was especially directed against myself. Let the answer to you come from me. What you say about Lucretius and his particles is no doubt true enough. I grant you also that many modern scientific specialists have, as to first principles, got no farther than he. For them, as for him, the universes, living and lifeless, result from a concurrence of particles supposed to have been originally independent. But, if you consider what science really implies, you will find that these particles, which are vulgarly supposed to be its starting-point, are by it, more vehemently than by any other system of philosophy, repudiated as impossible, and indeed unthinkable

things. For science, an independent particle is a contradiction in terms. Take the law of gravitation. This, as has been well said of it, means that every grain of ground pepper in Sirius affects every grain of salt in every salt-cellar in Paris. If science teaches us anything, here is its universal lesson—that no particle has ever existed or can exist, can be what it is, or be where it is, except in virtue of its connection with every other particle in the universe. If you realize this, you will see that matter, for modern science, is something very different from a chance concourse of atoms, each of which was originally a sort of hermit in space, and might possibly again become so. Each one of them is the centre of an endless web of connections. Except as a portion of such a web, it could literally have no existence. I don't expect you," Dr. Thistlewood went on, "to grasp in the interval between your soup and your cutlet a conception which is still unfamiliar to many men of science themselves; but a practised thinker, such as you are, will at least gather, from what I have said, that modern science, if it deduces life from matter, understands the word 'matter' in a sense so different from your own as not to be open to the criticisms which you just now sought to apply to it."

"I can only," said Mr. Barton, doggedly, "go by what I happen to read, and it seems to me that, not so many years ago, we had a great German scientist addressing this allocution to the world: 'The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile.' You, Dr. Thistlewood, may disguise materialism as you will; but wash off the paint, and to this favour does it come."

"There," said Dr. Thistlewood, "I must beg leave to differ from you. Before we fall foul of this statement, let us try the experiment of completing it. The brain secretes thought, but what has produced the brain? It is not for science, whatever it may be for theology, a little hermit mechanism, self-created, and generating its own movements. It is linked by a chain of causes to the whole past of the universe, and if detached for a moment from the system of things surrounding it—to make an impossible supposition—it wouldn't be a brain at all. Every smallest activity in your brain or mine is, for science, a movement of the thought universal."

"I think," said Mr. Barton, turning from Dr. Thistlewood to Lord Cotswold, "that my opponent is still eluding the ultimate crux of the situation. Until we consider what the nature of conscious life is, it may perhaps be possible to persuade ourselves that such life may be the product of compound causes; but I don't retract one word of what I said in my sermon—that the essence of our life is consciousness, and consciousness is essentially one and indivisible. Its centre is the ego, which is the nominative case of its verb—the numeral which alone gives value to the series of ciphers following it."

"When Sir Rawlin Stantor and I," said Lord Cotswold, "were together in Persia, we were induced by the atmosphere of the country—and partly perhaps by the fact that we had much time on our hands—to study Eastern philosophy—more especially Indian. Buddhism, which regards the separate transcendental Ego, not as a primary fact, but as the last illusion, and Brahminism with its Great Sentence, '*Thou* art *That*,' are far more in accord with modern science than any of the philosophies which at present have vogue in Europe. If you were to urge your argument about the permanence of the individual on a Hindu, the Great Vedantic Sentence, '*Thou* art *That*,' would be his answer to you."

"I confess," said Mr. Barton, slightly curling his lip, "that the Great Sentence is to me not particularly illuminating. I should myself get more out of the two Great Commandments in the Gospels."

Mr. Barton's manner was at that theological temperature which just divides zeal for God from the beginnings of discourtesy to man; but Lord Cotswold, instead of being offended by it, found a flavour in its warmth which promoted his own controversial appetite, and was just about to reply, himself in the best of tempers, when the proceedings were interrupted by a note which was placed in the hands of Dr. Thistlewood, and which—so he said when he had glanced at it—was a summons to attend a friend now staying at Southquay, and suffering from a complaint with the nature of which Dr. Thistlewood had special acquaintance. "I shall," he said, "be back in less than an hour; and Mr. Barton will, I hope, still be here."

"I," said Lord Cotswold, "will do my best to detain him; and while you're away, Gustav, will suspend our present discussion, and I'll show him my plans and photographs of early Syrian Churches."

Here was a suggestion which Mr. Barton found very welcome. He had no wish to see the familiar absurdities of materialism so draped and disguised that he could no longer curtly dispose of them; and as for the philosophies of the East, and the Brahmins with their Great Sentences, he felt with Omar that, if they agreed with his own faith, they were superfluous, and that if they disagreed with it, they were nonsense. What he wanted was specific facts, not erroneous opinions; and he consequently was delighted to turn, during Dr. Thistlewood's absence, from the heathen sophistries of the East to the sanctities of its Christian architecture.

Thus an hour was consumed in an examination of Lord Cotswold's portfolios. Their contents proved highly interesting. The first hour was followed by a second; and then, Dr. Thistlewood not having yet returned, Mr. Barton, expressing his surprise at the time's having gone so quickly, was about to make the declaration, which was rapidly becoming inevitable, that he must not allow himself to

keep his host up any longer, when the door opened and the absentee reappeared.

"I was," he said, "detained, and was afraid that, when I got back, I might find Mr. Barton gone. I don't know, Mr. Barton, if you object to sitting up late. His lordship here, who is good enough to follow my advice, generally goes to his bed an hour or so before I do; but, if you will come to my room, we can have a little *séance* there by ourselves."

"Well," said Lord Cotswold, "I must not disobey my master. I trust, Mr. Barton, that, very soon, when we are all three together again, you will give me the opportunity, not of changing your opinions for you, but of explaining certain alternatives to them which, in the face of facts like those with which you have been yourself confronted, will, when we are dead and gone, be competing with them for the world's acceptance."

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, when Lord Cotswold had taken his departure, "shall we come and get to business?"

In his tone, Mr. Barton noticed, there was something of peremptory dryness which had, during dinner, been wanting to it. Wondering what this could mean, Mr. Barton followed him.

"Now," said Dr. Thistlewood, closing the door of his study, where a cloak just worn by him was disposed over the back of an armchair, "we can discuss practical questions. Since I was called away from the dinner-table I have made a discovery which will perhaps save you trouble. I think that I know, without your telling me, your reason for wishing to inquire into the kinds of illusion to which the mind is liable from admittedly physical causes. Miss Vivian has been the recipient of some new mental impression which does not, in your opinion, accord with actual fact. You wish to assure yourself that in this opinion you are correct, so that you may, without doubt or scruple, give her your advice accordingly."

"By what means," said Mr. Barton, "you could have formed so strange an hypothesis, it passes my wit to conjecture. I admit, however, that it is, in substance, correct."

"Perhaps," Dr. Thistlewood continued, "I may venture to go even farther, and surmise that Miss Vivian conceives herself to have received some specific spiritual intimation the contents of which, in your judgment, are doubtful, or even obviously misleading. There my guessing power ends. But tell me if I am right so far."

"I admit it," said Mr. Barton. "You are certainly an adept at inferences."

"You must," said Dr. Thistlewood, "not be too quick with your compliments. In the pocket of my cloak there I have a book—a very pretty illustrated book. Let me take it to the reading-lamp. Will you kindly come over and examine it with me?"

Completely perplexed, Mr. Barton did as he was requested, and the book which Dr. Thistlewood spread open before him was none other than "The Visions of the Saints"—his own present to Miss Vivian.

"You will wonder," said Dr. Thistlewood, "how I came to be possessed of this. My answer is simple. The patient whom I have just been attending was Miss Vivian herself. Don't be alarmed. It's only the old trouble of sleeplessness. She told me again about what she calls her morning dreams. This evening she was slightly agitated, and longed for a good night's rest. Before doing what I could for her, I naturally asked her some questions, and it so happened that she spoke to me of two visions—not dreams in bed, but figures which she had seen in church. To these appearances she has been attaching some peculiar significance; but she would not tell me what. It is something, I conjecture, which excites your own disapproval."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Barton, "since so much has come to your knowledge, I may without impropriety add to it one farther detail. Miss Vivian is inclined to understand these manifestations as a command to her that she should quit the Anglican and enter the Roman communion."

"And such a command," said Dr. Thistlewood, "you, as an Anglican priest, naturally cannot accept as emanating from a Divine source. You are therefore anxious to find for it some natural origin. I can help you. To me, as no doubt to you, Miss Vivian described both these visions in detail. The first figure seen by her was habited in a white robe, ornamented with a red braid—a braid which had threads of gold in it. The second wore a hood and mantle of very deep sky-blue. Look, now, at these two pictures in this book, "The Visions of the Saints." There the two figures are, exactly as Miss Vivian saw them. The first has a portrait on its breast. Miss Vivian did not mention that. That detail is too grotesque perhaps for the modern fancy to assimilate, but there is the braid, there is the white robe, and there is the Virgin Mary, sky-blue from head to foot. Here, in accordance with your own very excellent simile, we have a glass which is normally a window, playing the part of a mirror, and so reflecting images in the patient's memory as to make her mistake them for external and supernatural objects. I could lend you, if you like, an extremely interesting book, which gives a minute history of a number of similar visions seen by Welsh Nonconformists during an epidemic of religious revivalism. These visions—the Saviour with His wounds bleeding, winged angels holding tapers, and so forth—visions so definite, that the percipients never doubted the external reality of them—were found in every case which admitted of precise examination to be reproductions of pictures

familiar to the person in question. In Miss Vivian's case I have discovered something more. You may possibly have heard, without giving the fact your attention, that hypnotic conditions are producible simply by fixing the eyes on some bright object. An object of this kind played a primary part here. The bright object here was the lamp hanging in your chancel. Miss Vivian, on each occasion, before the vision appeared, had, as she probably told you, fixed her eyes on this. Gradually a state supervened of which her recollection was vague; and out of this vagueness the two figures developed themselves. I could tell you more about the details of this psychological process, which is probably the same in the case of all ecstatics, from the Platonists of Alexandria down to St. Francis and St. Teresa, if such information were necessary for your present purpose. I incline to suppose, however, that what I have just said will be enough for you. Miss Vivian's visions originated in certain pictures which you yourself gave her, and these her brain, under the influence of a specific stimulus, presented to her consciousness as symbols of the emotions which at the time dominated her. They mean, therefore, as much as the emotions mean—neither more nor less, and you may assure both yourself and her that they have no other authority."

Mr. Barton listened with a feeling of profound relief, which was now and then traversed by a shudder of indignant pain. It was evident that Dr. Thistlewood in the present case was substantially right. The call to a celibate life, and possibly to the Roman Church, which to Miss Vivian had appeared as a Divine command, was manifestly nothing more than the creation of a disordered fancy. But when Mr. Barton heard the voice of the gross materialist degrading all visions to conjuring tricks of the human brain, he felt that, in order to possess himself of the facts he sought, he had to kneel and dive for them in a cloaca of reeking falsehood. At all events, the liberating fact was now in his secure possession. He would now be able, with a conscience absolutely clear, to destroy that gateless wall which, suddenly rising in front of him, had threatened to divide him for ever from the soul and from the breast he loved.

"Well," said Dr. Thistlewood, eyeing Mr. Barton curiously, "you told us at dinner to-night that you came to the Turkish Castle in search of practical facts, not of any general principles. You have had an instalment of what you wanted, and perhaps you had better go and sleep on it. But, my dear sir, before you go, I have something more to add. I have told you one fact connected with this young lady's welfare, but I have still to tell you some others; and for her sake, just as much as for your own, after what I have seen to-night, I must submit them to your close attention. You would not wish Miss Vivian to fall ill again for want of such a thing as proper sleep, would you? If you want to see that famous real self

of hers established permanently on its proper throne, you wouldn't do anything to interfere, would you, with her restoration to sound physical health? I thought not. Well, if such a restoration is to be achieved, it is necessary before all things that she should, so far as is possible, be kept free from anything in the nature of excitement or emotional agitation. And now, Mr. Barton, listen to something further, which you doubtless know already, but which you won't object to hearing from the mouth of another person. For some reason or other—I need not inquire what—the disturbances to which Miss Vivian is liable have some intimate connection with yourself. Your own conduct may, therefore, if not very carefully controlled, be fraught for her with the gravest dangers; and I want to-morrow morning, either here or at your own house, to put certain details before you of which at present you know nothing. Meanwhile," Dr. Thistlewood continued, putting his hand in his pocket, "I have something to give you—it was better, I thought, to keep it until we had done our talk—which will probably be a fresh proof to you of the truth of what I have just said. Miss Vivian this evening was, when we were left alone together, too much perturbed by something to be able to talk calmly, until she got it off her mind by writing a few lines to you. I told her where you had been dining, and that I should find you here when I got back; so she begged me to act as her postman, and I now discharge my duty. You will, no doubt, prefer to break her seal in private. To-morrow, then, Mr. Barton, let us renew our conversation here."

Eager to devour the letter which had thus unexpectedly come to him, Mr. Barton was almost effusive in his promise to return next morning, and hurried home through the darkness, taking his treasure with him.

CHAPTER XII

When Mr. Barton was, some twelve hours later, ushered again into Dr. Thistlewood's study, his eyes had a hope in them which seemed so assured and high that sublunary delays and obstacles would be powerless to disturb its patience. In Miss Vivian's letter of last night lay the secret of this exalted mood. Whilst he had been wearing himself out in meditation and in anxious inquiry concerning her, she, it appeared, had been led by the Divine hand to a conclusion coincident with his own.

"I cannot," she had written, "rest until I have told you this. You were right when you urged me to examine myself very carefully, before putting any final interpretation on that which I have seen and heard. No—I realize it now. I am not meant for that special life to which it first seemed to me that I was being called in so plain a way. The voice of the Sacred Heart must speak to us through our own hearts. You know my heart better than I have lately known it myself. I felt that I must confess this before I could get to sleep."

Dr. Thistlewood contemplated his visitor with a surprise that had some contempt in it.

"Mr. Barton," he said, "you must be very easily pleased. I've seen many lovers in my time; but I never saw one who looked as happy as you do when the object of his affections was in the gravest possible danger."

"Danger!" exclaimed Mr. Barton. "Good God, what has happened? Tell me."

"Sit down," said Dr. Thistlewood. "She's in no danger of dying. Suspend both your hopes and your alarms, and give me your very closest attention. If I had not noticed the expression of your face when you entered, I might have thought it necessary to ask my old question over again—Are you still seriously bent on making this young lady your wife? But I'll spare you the trouble of answering me; and I'll spare you the trouble also of adding something which I am sure you are longing to impress on me. I mean that the young lady, after a series of mental adventures, is learning

at last to reward your affection by returning it, and that her letter of last night gives you fresh grounds for your confidence. Let us assume that such is the case, and that, if there were nothing to check you, you and Miss Vivian, before many months were over, would be standing in some elegant chancel, full of flowers and bridesmaids, and receiving the primal blessing known to have been breathed o'er Eden. Well, you won't have forgotten what I said to you one night about Miss Vivian, before I had explained to you the secret of her connection with Miss Enid Wynn. I told you as emphatically as I could that she was not a fit wife for anybody. In spite of what you have learnt since then, you don't seem to agree with me. I, on the other hand, am of the same opinion still. I will, however, for the moment modify my original manner of putting the case, and content myself with saying that she is unfitted to become your wife at present; and I will ask you to reconsider, in the light of some facts I can put before you, the question, which you yourself declared to be all-important, of placing what you call her real self out of danger of any farther disturbances."

"Now," said Mr. Barton, "you are talking with perfect reasonableness. Speak, and I will engage that you shall find me not less reasonable than yourself."

"Well, then," said Dr. Thistlewood, "you must, without interrupting me, let me put things in a manner with which you will not agree. You, for your own part, are satisfied that the lady whom you call Miss Vivian, and whose moral and emotional temperament renders her so sympathetic to yourself, is the real self or soul pertaining to a certain body, the other self being less real, or not real at all; and in this view you are supported, you say, by the admissions of the very men who have made the question of divided lives their study. As to this last point you are right. The distinguished writers to whom you refer—I mean those who have dealt with the cases of Mr. Hanna and Miss B.—do speak as though one of the selves, in cases such as these, were more real than the others. But in doing so, they speak—perhaps they even think—inaccurately. No one of these selves is more real or less real than any other, except in so far as it is mentally more complete, associated with better physical health, and is, above all, more permanent. Do you," said Dr. Thistlewood, taking from a table something which looked like a child's tin trumpet considerably battered, and amputated at both its ends, "know what this object is? This scientific implement is the work of Mr. Hugo Arundel, who honoured me by a commission to solder one of its joints for him. It is a kaleidoscope, and a very efficient one. It will show you, each time it is shaken, some new geometrical pattern; but no one of the patterns is more real than another. The same is the case with

these divided lives. They result when the organism, through which they are manifested, is unstable, just as any one arrangement of those fragments of coloured glass is unstable; and the ordinary single self, such as your self and mine, differs from these because normal organisms like our own possess a stability which these others—the exceptions—lack. The normal self—yours, Mr. Barton, or mine—bears to any one of these alternating selves—such as Miss Wynn's or Miss Vivian's—the same relation that a tesselated pavement bears to one of the patterns in Mr. Hugo Arundel's kaleidoscope. You won't accept this, of course, as a full account of the facts, but, so far as it goes—ask yourself—don't you admit that it is true?"

Mr. Barton reflected, and at last answered with a frown, "If one puts your implications altogether aside, and takes what you say as relating to the surface of the facts only—well, in that limited sense, I don't know that I should disagree with you."

"I won't," said Dr. Thistlewood, "overtax you in the matter of concessions. You, at all events, feel that stability is so essential to a healthy self that you would not wish, if you married Miss Nest Vivian, to know that at any moment she might turn into Miss Enid Wynn; and however unreal you may persuade yourself that the self of Miss Wynn is, you would not be much pleased if, for instance, while you were standing at the altar, the voice of Miss Wynn were to come from your bride's lips, and treat you to those views of matrimony which Miss Wynn, on one occasion, expounded to you."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Mr. Barton, sharply. "You surely don't hint that such an occurrence as this is possible?"

"You might," said Dr. Thistlewood, "very easily make it so. What I have just said, I have said because I wish to warn you, not because I wish to inflict on you any speculative opinions of my own. Perhaps you will see now that, in opposing your matrimonial schemes, I have more to say for myself than you thought I had; and I have by no means done yet. Do you remember that time when you came here and talked about the case of Félida, and insisted on the fact that all Félida's selves sprang, as it were, from a soil of the same general memories? And do you remember how I pointed out to you that, in Mr. Hanna's case, this feature was absent? What I then said about this requires a little farther explanation. As you told us in your sermon, what you understand by self is the contents of the conscious circle, of which the ego is the indivisible centre. Well, in this sense, and in this sense only, are the divided selves, of which we are speaking, really separated from one another."

"Precisely," said Mr. Barton. "Just so. That's precisely what I urged myself."

"I doubt, my dear friend," said Dr. Thistlewood, "whether you knew precisely what you urged. It seems to me that you wanted to

prove two things—one being that these young women were the same self, the other being that one of them was not a self at all. But now we have abandoned speculation for practical possibilities and likelihoods, and I only allude to your theories with a view to giving point to facts. Let us take it, then, that your matured view is this. Miss Vivian—your own soul's counterpart, brimming with aspiration and emotion—is for you the one true personality associated with Miss Vivian's body; and you wish that body, with all the powers pertaining to it, to belong to Miss Vivian's soul, as your own body belongs to yours. Very well, this kind of result was, as you truly said, accomplished in the case of Mr. Hanna, and it might quite possibly be accomplished in Miss Vivian's likewise; but there is one thing which never seems to have occurred to you—namely, a certain risk by which this unifying process would, in Miss Vivian's case, be accompanied. It never seems to have occurred to you that, if one of the two personalities succeeded in suppressing the other, the one that came out the victor might be not Miss Vivian, but Miss Wynn. I am not trying to frighten you with any bogey of my own imagination. I am dealing with simple facts. Mr. Hanna's self was reunified, because the original self at last got the better of the secondary. Well, you will have seen, if you have studied Dr. Gonteau's notes, that the original self in the present case was Miss Wynn's, and not Miss Vivian's. Further, Miss Wynn's is the self which has been most persistent. For every eight months of Miss Wynn's life Miss Vivian has had barely five; and whilst Miss Vivian's health has been, and is precarious, Miss Wynn's has been exceptionally sound. But that's not all. I have something else to point out to you at which I have not yet hinted. You are aware of the way in which Miss Vivian has been troubled by persistent dreams. At luncheon the other day she mentioned one or two of them, which forced themselves on her like tiresome pictures over and over again. Amongst them were dreams of two railway stations with grotesque and impossible names. One of these names was Pog, she told us. The other, as you may remember, was Kethar. Perhaps you will begin to see light when I tell you that Kethar is really a portion of a name very much longer, which is actually painted somewhere in large letters on a board—this portion being the portion which alone, from a certain point, a traveller in a passing train would see between a bookstall and one of the station buildings. Kethar, Mr. Barton, is a portion of the name Market Harborough. In the same way Pog explains itself as a portion of another name—the name of a station which you have very likely seen yourself. Pog is neither more nor less than the first syllable of Poggibonsi—Poggibonsi being a place not very far from Siena. Miss Vivian's experience of England, as you know, is confined to Southquay. The very name of Market

Harborough is in all probability strange to her. She told me herself that she had never set foot in Italy. But Miss Wynn has stayed near the first of these places, and has passed through the station constantly; and when I myself first set eyes on her she was not far from the second. So you see the materials of which Miss Wynn is composed are lying not so very far beneath the surface of Miss Nest Vivian. You need but give too rude a shake to that delicate vessel of possibilities, and the pattern which you love will go, and the pattern which you hate will be shaken back again. Think of what all this means. I don't refer to its bearing on your theory of the indivisible self, or any general theories of any sort or kind. I refer to its bearing on a particular matrimonial project. Can you consider it fitting that you—an English clergyman—should marry, not knowing what you marry—whether it is a saint who will be equally devoted to your own Deity and yourself, or a sinner who will deny the one and repudiate or bring ignominy on the other? Come, be a man, Mr. Barton. Give this foolish project up. Promise me on your honour that you will cease to push your suit—that you will, on the contrary, honestly do your best to make this young lady regard you as her clerical friend, or her spiritual pastor, only. If you won't give me your promise, I must do what I had rather not do."

"Dr. Thistlewood," said Mr. Barton, "I have listened to you with great forbearance. I have passed over your sneers at things which I hold sacred. But now, when you demand a promise from me that I will not marry without your canonical sanction—that I will renounce the prospect of marriage—a prospect which need not be immediate, for I have the patience of Jacob—that I will withdraw, or, like a coward, shrink from renewing my avowals of that affection to which she has learnt to look for succour—no, I will do nothing of the kind. Dr. Thistlewood, I have in my pocket at this moment that letter which I received last night. Miss Vivian, in that letter, shows that she is as sane as you are. She shows that she is capable of criticizing her own impulses, and disregarding them when she sees that they are unreasonable; and do you think it is likely that I shall abandon her because a peculiar danger threatens her from which, as I have reason to know, my support would be her best protection? Shall I tell you what that letter which you gave me last night contains? Miss Vivian was for a time under the impression that those appearances, which she took for visions, were supernatural indications that her true refuge would be a convent. Before I was in a position to point out to her her possible error, she had divined that error herself, and she could not rest last night—you yourself told me so—before she had written to tell me this. Well, if you like it, you can read her own words yourself. In all reasonable ways I am willing to be guided by your advice; but instead of allowing

her to suppose that I retract the devotion I have offered to her, I shall do whatever I can to assure her that it is hers for ever."

Dr. Thistlewood, having read the letter, handed it back to Mr. Barton.

"You are," he said, "a very obstinate man. If that letter means what you think it does—and many lovers have been confident on very much weaker grounds—my own disagreeable duty becomes more imperative than ever; though even now I will try to dispense with my *ultima ratio*. I am sorry if I have spoken of your own theological beliefs in a way which merits your reprehension, for I want with your permission, to return to them. I will try not to offend you. The lady, or the body of the lady, whom you propose to marry, has received already three of the Christian sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. Two of these sacraments can be received but once in a lifetime. The child by whom these sacraments was received, was a child of whose life, of whose beliefs, and even of whose existence, Miss Vivian knows nothing. If Miss Vivian became your wife, would not you, as a clergyman, feel some difficulty in determining her relation to these means of grace? I can hardly venture to hope that considerations of this kind, though they go to the very root of your beliefs as to souls and sacraments, will deflect you from your present purpose. Still there is no knowing, and it seemed to me worth while to mention them."

"I confess," said Mr. Barton, calmly, "for I am not afraid of being candid, that these difficulties at first appalled me; but on reflection they vanished. I have no cut and dried solution of them; but one possible solution is obvious, should no other offer itself; and for me this suffices. The grace conferred in baptism is, as we all know, conferred on a being who at the time is unable to understand or profit by it. It germinates unperceived in the system, its results being not apparent for a period which is often considerable. In special cases, such as the one in question now, we may assume that the grace of Confirmation operates in a similar way."

"And thus," said Dr. Thistlewood, "you would, I presume, vindicate the substantial identity of the two selves concerned, superficial appearances notwithstanding."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Barton. "That I assume in any case."

"Very well, then," said Dr. Thistlewood, "we shall, perhaps, come to an understanding. My *ultima ratio* must be put before you after all. But, Mr. Barton, I want you to bear me witness when I tell you certain things which I am going to tell you presently, that I have done all I could to conceal them, and only bring them out now because you render this course necessary. Miss Wynn Vivian—or whatever we like to call her—received, during that unregenerate

childhood of which Miss Nest Vivian knows nothing—how many of the sacraments of your Church was it? Did we say two or three? Yes, we said three—to be sure we did. Well, Mr. Barton, it is now my duty to inform you, that Miss Enid Wynn, of whose life your prospective bride knows nothing, has received—if I express myself correctly—a fourth sacrament also, and that is the sacrament of marriage. Miss Enid Wynn has a husband alive—and, if I had been telling you this a little while ago—I should have had to add that he was alive and kicking at Southquay."

Mr. Barton with a violent movement pushed himself back in his chair. His mouth gaped, and for a second or two it remained open.

"Let me," Dr. Thistlewood continued, "tell you the whole story. If you care at your leisure to look at Dr. Gonteau's notes again, you will see how one thing fits in with another. A rough outline of the events is all that I need give you now. I first encountered Miss Wynn in the train between Florence and Siena. There was in my compartment, when I started, one other traveller only—an over-dressed sallow man with large protruding eyes. I heard him speaking Italian, but I took no particular notice of him. By-and-by at a side station, a third passenger joined us—a girl, evidently a lady, whose independent demeanour, and somewhat masculine dress caught my attention and made me wonder who she was. I had, however, ceased to think of her when some rearrangement of bags, rugs, and umbrellas began to be made jointly by the other traveller and herself, and I realized that the two were in the act of starting an acquaintance. They first spoke in Italian. Ultimately they took to English. The obvious good-breeding of the girl, and the glib under-breeding of the man, made me wonder at the readiness with which she met his advances. Two days later I came on this same couple enjoying each other's society in the public gardens at Siena, and I saw them twice afterwards emerging together from the same small inn. The moment I met Miss Vivian a certain likeness between her and this heroine of Siena struck me; but differences of dress, manner, voice, deportment, and expression, rendered the likeness less remarkable than the contrast. My second encounter with Miss Wynn was at a small hotel in the Hebrides. She had no recollection of having ever seen me before. She was by way of staying with some friends in Ross-shire or Sutherland, but was evidently quite independent of them, and had come to this place—so she told me—for fishing. Her name in the visitors' book was entered as Mrs. Jordan. No Mr. Jordan was visible; but he appeared on the scene next day. He arrived in the vehicle which was to take me to my own destination. Mr. Jordan was the gentleman who had enlivened Miss Wynn's stay at Siena. I am not much given to gossip, but the driver of my waggonette was.

Mr. and Mrs. Jordan, it appeared, had been resident for some weeks in the neighbourhood, and had lately been married in accordance with the requirements of Scotch law. To this information the driver added a remark which I did not catch at the time, but I realized its purport afterwards. Returning a month later from the remote house of a friend, and happening to stay again at the same hotel for a night or so, I learnt from the local doctor, with whom I foregathered over a glass of whisky, that a lady—a stranger who had only just been married—had, under his auspices, given birth to a child, that the child had been promptly committed to the care of a crofter's family, had died in a day or two, and been buried, that the parents had attended the funeral, and that the mother had been heard to remark, 'That shan't happen again,' and that mother and father had disappeared by different steamers. Well, Mr. Barton—to make a long story short—it has come to my knowledge that this man Jordan, whose father's home is in Glasgow, and whose mother is a native of Turin, has, having once been a courier, and I don't know what besides, been travelling in Italy for a firm which manufactures a cheap fuel from peat. What his relations with Miss Wynn were at Siena I must leave you to guess. Anyhow he saw reason to believe—and he was right in his belief—that she had money, and his marriage to her, in a country where marriage is exceptionally easy, was the result. His wife, however—for during her illness here she told me this herself, and under hypnosis she proved to be extremely communicative—took a very inadequate view of the seriousness of a Scotch marriage, regarding it merely as a means of getting herself out of an awkward scrape. It was, in any case for the time, to be kept a secret. The wife was to rejoin her friends as if nothing had happened, and when she had rejoined them the process of regret began. Certain papers, which unintentionally this gentleman had left in her hands, revealed to her the fact that he had been guilty of irregular transactions, which would, if brought to light, consign him to penal servitude; and, with this knowledge at her disposal, she was confident that she could keep him at a distance. He, for his part, was not too anxious to obtrude himself till some doubts which had arisen in his mind with regard to her fortune had been elucidated; and meanwhile, as you will see from Dr. Gonteau's notes, those events took place in the neighbourhood of Kethar or Market Harborough, which removed her for the time from her husband's ken altogether by transforming Mrs. Jordan, or Miss Wynn, into the person of Miss Nest Vivian. Mr. Jordan, who was not without his plausibilities, might, having thought things over, not perhaps have been inconsolable, if he had not, in the course of a holiday, happened to visit Southquay. There, having transformed himself into Count Giordano, he was doubtless looking out for a fortune which was not a speculation but a certainty.

There, however, at a ball, he happened to catch sight of Miss Vivian. Her likeness to his wife struck him at once so forcibly that he made, through Colonel O'Brian, such inquiries as he could as to her family. What he heard convinced him at first that the likeness which had struck him was accidental. He gathered, however, that Miss Vivian had large means, or large expectations, and then, when Miss Vivian disappeared, and when, first on the golf-course and subsequently in a motor-car, a figure began to be visible to him, which at a distance was indistinguishable from his wife's; when he gathered, moreover, as he did from Colonel O'Brian, that this new apparition was Miss Vivian's near relation—well, you can guess what followed. He lay in wait for his wife, who first doubted his identity, and was then determined to elude him. At last she grasped her nettle. She met him by appointment in her car at a spot outside the town. She took him to a place in the neighbourhood, and there they fought out their battle. As to the idea that their marriage was legally valid, she laughed at it. Count Giordano convinced her of her error. Count Giordano's wife, on the other hand, convinced the Count that, if their marriage were made known to her parents, every penny of her fortune would disappear; and she capped this announcement with another, still more efficacious, relating to the proofs possessed by her of the Count's business delinquencies. Here, Mr. Barton, is a letter which, during that curious time intervening between Miss Wynn's accident and the transformation into Miss Vivian which followed it, Miss Wynn confided to my keeping. It is a letter from her to her husband, in which she informs him that, if he wishes to make any claim on her, his claim must be referred to me, I having been placed in possession by her of all the necessary documents relating to his career and character. But perhaps it is needless to trouble you with this shrewd and characteristic epistle; it will be enough to remind you of something which occurred when you yourself were present. You will remember that, amongst those dreams which Miss Vivian finds so troublesome, she mentioned, in addition to the railway stations, a churchyard and a curious cottage. The cottage is the cottage in which her inconvenient child lived, the churchyard is that in which her inconvenient child is buried. I need add no more. I will not even ask you to admit that I have been right in my opposition to your projects. I regret your obstinacy, which has forced me to draw the veil from some few facts unknown even to Miss Vivian's parents. I regret your obstinacy, but, believe me, I respect your pain."

For some minutes there was silence between the two men. It was suddenly broken by the entrance of Lord Cotswold. Then, for all the surprises which Dr. Thistlewood had inflicted on Mr. Barton, Mr. Barton, rising from his chair, paid him back in kind.

CHAPTER XIII

"I HOPE," said Lord Cotswold, "that, as we soon shall be hearing the luncheon-gong, I am not interrupting a private talk prematurely, by coming to beg that Mr. Barton will not desert us; for he owes me the opportunity of finishing a certain discourse, which came the other night to a very unfinished ending. The text of it, Mr. Barton, as you will remember, was the curious mental condition of one of your own friends."

Mr. Barton jumped up alertly. He had suppressed every sign of agitation, and he answered with a ghastly jauntiness.

"Dr. Thistlewood and I," he said, "have been talking over that very subject. Painful, of course—painful from a personal point of view, but interesting to every thinker on account of the problems suggested by it. Yes, Lord Cotswold, I shall look on it as a high privilege to hear something more about the manner in which a Brahmin, with his Great Sentence, would explain it. The Brahmins—yes, no doubt we may derive much comfort from the Brahmins."

"Then, in that case," said Dr. Thistlewood, staring at him, "I'll take Mr. Barton for a wash and a brush-up, and he and I will come to the drawing-room presently."

With a friendly hand laid on Mr. Barton's arm, he conducted him along a passage, then through the great bare room where the gramophone and the bioscope and the long deal table were haunted with memories of a certain terrible morning, then into a passage beyond, from which opened several doors.

"Come in here," said Dr. Thistlewood. "You see this little sitting-room. In there is a bedroom. You will find soap and water and a hair-brush. These are quarters," he went on, when Mr. Barton returned, having made a little clinking and splashing with jug, basin, and water—"these are quarters which I have prepared for prospective patients; and I think it may give point to certain things I have been lately saying, if I tell you that these are the rooms occupied by Miss Enid Wynn, when her change, between sleeping and waking, into another character was completing itself. These rooms are kept exactly as she left them. You have just used her soap and brushes.

Her clothes are in there, in the wardrobe. Do you know my object in keeping the things here in this way? It is that, if by any accident Miss Enid Wynn should come back to us, her return may be accomplished here, and the true nature of the disappearance of somebody else kept secret. And now, my dear friend, I think that my own mission to you is accomplished."

Mr. Barton looked at his companion, and his lips for a moment quivered, as though he were about to break down; but the next moment he recovered himself. The quivering turned into a smirk.

"Thank you," he said. "Yes, thank you. What you have told me has been most conclusive."

When, however, they reached the drawing-room, in which Lord Cotswold was awaiting them, and into which, through an open door, the luncheon-table sent a faint aroma, Mr. Barton suddenly pressed his hands to his temples, and exclaimed—

"Dear, dear! here is one of my neuralgic headaches again. Lady Susannah Lipscombe tells me she can cure all my troubles with a stick of wax and camphor. But I think, if you'll excuse me, I will not come into the dining-room. While you are at lunch I'll take a brisk walk along the shore, and will rejoin you afterwards. By that time I shall be quite right again; and I would not miss for anything your elucidation of the Great Sentence."

"If you're really in pain," said Lord Cotswold, "your plan is perhaps a wise one. Go for a blow by the shore, and come back as soon as it suits you. You will find us here, and possibly a few people besides—one person in particular, from whom I have just had a line—Lady Conway. She mentions that she has something important which she wishes to communicate to yourself. But you and I and Dr. Gustav will have our talk in the smoking-room, and you needn't see any one unless you are so inclined."

"Ah!" said Dr. Thistlewood; "and here comes a note for me too. We live in a hailstorm of letters. You begin lunch; do. I'll join when I've answered this."

The note was from Lady Susannah.

"I thank you so much," she wrote, "for managing to put Nest to sleep. Lord Cotswold has asked us to tea, to say good-bye to Maud Conway, who carries off Oswald Arundel, on his way to Constantinople. Do watch Nest, and tell me what you think of her. When you came to see her last night, I hardly had time to tell you much. Sir Rawlin had been dining with us; and when he is there, Nest is generally in good spirits, and exerts herself; but last night she hardly spoke to him. This made me fear she was unwell; and as soon as we were all in the drawing-room, she was really on the point of fainting. Sir Rawlin caught her just in time, for she was standing. I never saw any one so considerate and kind and gentle.

He got her to a sofa without making any fuss, and talked to her with so much tact, and cheered her up so, that in a few minutes she revived; and I don't think anybody, except myself, realized that there had been anything the matter. And just at the right moment he slipped away; and Nest, instead of feeling faint, suffered from nothing but restlessness. I don't think there's much in it, really; and I was sorry myself that she insisted on sending for you."

"Ah!" said Dr. Thistlewood to himself, as he put the note in his pocket. "So this explains her repudiation of the command to enter the convent. Poor Mr. Barton! Good Heavens! I hope we shan't hear that he's been found at the bottom of one of these red cliffs!"

This belated apprehension, though not perhaps quite groundless, was not justified by events. In less than a couple of hours Mr. Barton returned, to find Lord Cotswold and Dr. Thistlewood lingering over their coffee-cups in the smoking-room, whose balcony, notwithstanding subsequent repairs, still bore certain traces of the ravage of the fateful storm.

"Welcome," said Lord Cotswold. "I hope you are feeling better. We are safe here from intrusion. Still, when the time comes, I hope you will see Lady Conway. She is coming to say good-bye, and is taking young Arundel away with her."

Mr. Barton, as Dr. Thistlewood noticed, had suffered no collapse. His nerves were evidently still in the same state of tension.

"Yes," he said, seating himself, "I'm quite fit for talking now, or rather for hearing Lord Cotswold talk, and give me the explanation he owes me. Yes, Lord Cotswold, if things really are as facts, and as our friend Dr. Thistlewood declare they are—if what we used to call the soul, and if all the things that we valued in it, are merely so many patterns, formed by that kaleidoscope the brain, shut up in its neat bone case—if a woman's character is not her own character at all, but merely the successive gleanings of a shot-silk dress worn by her, which changes its colours as the draughts in her room agitate it—it will be interesting to me to learn how, when we are all convinced of this, the business of living and loving will be reasonably carried on. I won't be so foolish as to ask what will become of our hopes—on which even a writer like De Quincey apparently set such store—our hopes of one day seeing again 'those blessed household countenances cleansed from the dishonour of the grave.' I will only ask what will become of our efforts, our duties, our principles, our friendly likings for one another, without which we should be rather dull. In other words, if our souls are not our souls—if they are merely little bits of the universe—what shall we get in exchange for them? If I mistake not, the Brahmins, with their Great Sentence, have an answer for us."

Lord Cotswold, somewhat surprised by Mr. Barton's unwonted volubility, and a note in his voice which did not seem wholly natural, was nevertheless delighted to find him in this receptive mood.

"I fully admit," he said, "that these new views as to human life must suggest to the Western World all those difficulties which you feel yourself as a priest, and which your language hardly caricatures. But a view almost as strange was forced in the human consciousness when it was shown that this solid earth, once accepted as the centre, and almost as the sum of the universe, was merely one globule out of many, all spinning round a common sun. The mind of man has accustomed itself to this new conception, and in time it will accommodate itself—such is my own belief—to any others which the logic of facts may force on it. The process for us, in the present case, may be slow; but in the East it has been accomplished for something like three thousand years. But before I Brahminize to you, let me Platonize a little first. You are a student, I am sure, of Plato?"

"Yes," said Mr. Barton mechanically. "I may claim for myself that character."

"Well," said Lord Cotswold, "I gather from something you said the other night to Dr. Gustav, that for you the intellectual foundation of what you call the philosophy of the spirit is the impossibility of getting out of a complex mechanism like the brain, that unit, that pin-point of consciousness which is what we mean by self, and through which alone for ourselves the world has any existence. Now, a large part of the difficulties urged in this connection both by you and by all assailants of what is commonly called materialism, was, in my opinion, answered by Dr. Gustav when he dwelt upon that obvious fact, to which many scientific men are still so strangely blind, that none of the phenomena which they study have really any separate existence at all—that no one of them is intelligible except in connection with the All. The steam in the cylinder of the steam engine is impossible without the boiler. The vitality which manifests itself in your brain and mine is equally impossible apart from the vitality of the entire universe. The entire universe, though to the eye, or to the visual imagination, it is an aggregate of parts or particles, is for thought, as Dr. Gustav said, a web of indissoluble connections. If you compare personality to the gleamings of a shot-silk dress, each dress is merely one fold of the seamless garment of the All. Your own self cannot appear more absolutely indivisible to you, nor mine to me, than is the oneness of the All when we think of it as the sole self-existing fact; and when we so think of it, we are in the presence of God. Nothing is in you or me that is not in this divine Total. If what we experience as personality exists in me and you, it exists in the Total also—but there in so large a measure

that it baffles our understanding. Well, now for Plato. You remember Plato's allegory of the cave?"

Mr. Barton nodded.

"Plato," Lord Cotswold continued, "represented the mass of mankind as dwelling in a dark cave, and unable to see the sun. Let us alter his allegory a little; and suppose that, instead of being shut up in a cave, men are physically so constructed that they are able to look downwards only. In this case, just as in the other, it will be impossible for them to see the sun itself in the heavens; but every morning, if they look, they will see an image of it in every dewdrop. The individual drops evaporate, the sun-image that was in each ceases, but next morning and the next there are new drops in the place of them, and the same unit of light is alive and divine in each. What the dewdrop is to the sun, that for us is the brain to the human self."

Instead of offering any objection to this way of putting the case, Mr. Barton smiled, somewhat vaguely, but still tolerantly.

"Yes," he said, "yes. That's a very pretty piece of symbolism."

"And now," said Lord Cotswold, "I will, if I'm not wearying you, pass from my Platonizing to my Brahminizing, and come back to the Great Sentence: '*Thou* art *That*.' I agree with you, Mr. Barton, that it is to the Western mind not very illuminating, when enunciated without commentary; but, with the aid of what I have just been saying, I can now make it more intelligible to you. When the Eastern philosopher says to the individual seeker for truth, meditating on his own nature, '*Thou* art *That*,' he means by his '*That*' the sum-total of things from which in ordinary life the 'Thou' is accustomed to distinguish itself. There is a story told of a great Eastern saint, which will bring the idea home to your sympathies as well as to your understanding. The aim of this man's life—poor heathen as he was he did not enjoy even the privileges of a Christian dissenter—was the achievement—as it was with the heroes of your own Acta Sanctorum—of union with the Divine nature; and the story represents him as coming again and again to the door of the Lord's heart, and standing without, and knocking. On each occasion the Lord asks, 'Who is there?' And again and again the saint answers, 'It is I.' But so long as he answers in this way, he is told that he cannot enter. At last a day comes when the question 'Who knocks?' being repeated, the saint answers, not 'It is I,' but 'Lord, it is Thou Thyself.' Then the door opens, and the saint and the Lord are one."

"Yes," said Mr. Barton. "The saint and his Lord were one. Precisely. Such a union is the object of all sanctity."

"I mention this story," Lord Cotswold continued, "not because it solves, for you or for me, all the practical problems which, as

you rightly say, will arise if the world at large ever realizes that conception of the individual which the division in the personality of some friend of yours has at last presented to your imagination. It does not solve these problems, but it shows that this conception, to us novel, has been familiar to the mind of a civilization far older than our own, and that it is capable of being invested with a profound religious significance. I will say more. How does the Christian religion profess to reveal God to us? Through a divine man. It is only through being translated for us into terms of our own nature that the Infinite and the Ineffable assumed for the Christian any definite meaning. What the Word made Flesh is for all of us, according to your own theology, that are we all for one another, according to these revelations which science is now forcing on such of us as have eyes to see. In so far as we each of us experience what we know as our own selves, we experience, and we embody, the working of forces which are part of the Divine Infinite. In our affections, whether of friendship or love, we are parts of that desire and will in virtue of which the worlds endure. A part of our actions results from what we know as conscious motive, and aims at a known object. Another part of our actions—and possibly a part much larger—results from impulses which lie beyond our ken, and which, though they carry us on their current, we have not learnt the art of translating into terms of reason. Into what terms of reason, motive and emotion men will translate their new knowledge of themselves as parts of the universe, which growing out of it end by disappearing into it—how they will view such cases as that of Mr. Barton's friend—cases in which some personality perhaps loved by some one, dies the most indubitable of deaths by being changed before our eyes into another—how such materials will be woven by men hereafter into some new religion by which they may live and die, I know no more than Cato knew of the religion that produced St. Francis. But this I do know—that Faith must follow knowledge, not in the beginning, but in the end. The development of new knowledge will be rapid. The assimilation of it will be comparatively slow, and faith will be long bruised and molested by it before it submits itself to any admitted change. Meanwhile," said Lord Cotswold; but a sharp sound interrupted him. He had not observed that, during the last few minutes, Mr. Barton, in an aimless way, had taken up his coffee-spoon, and had been playing with it, very much as a child might, and this spoon had by accident dropped ringing upon his saucer. At the same moment a servant announced a visitor.

Lord Cotswold turned to Mr. Barton with a rapid change of manner.

"It is Lady Conway," he said. "Have you any objection to seeing her?"

"Rather not," said Mr. Barton, making use of one of those forced colloquialisms with which he had garnished his discourse when he was exhibiting his "crib" to Sir Rawlin.

"Then in that case," said Lord Cotswold, "we may as well have her in here."

"Don't any of you get up from your chairs," said the visitor as she appeared in the doorway; "you look all of you much too comfortable. Ah, I am indeed fortunate. I see a person here—no, Dr. Gustav, it's not you—to whom I have something to say of a very particular kind, and whom I despaired of meeting before I went back to London. A talk with him will be much better. Lord Cotswold, I heard you demanding another coffee-cup—I presume for my own benefit. Will you, while it is being brought, let me deprive you of Mr. Barton's society, and seduce him into your conservatory for a few minutes' conversation on business with him?"

In response to a look from the lady, Mr. Barton had risen.

"Certainly," he said, "certainly. I shall be only too delighted."

With a gesture of deferent patronage Lady Conway placed a hand on his arm, and began her conversation very audibly while the priest was still struggling with the door handle.

"I suppose," she said, "that a man with your means and talents does not intend to bury them in the napkin of a semi-fashionable watering-place?"

"You refer, I presume, to Southquay," said Mr. Barton. "Certainly not—certainly not. I've determined to leave already."

"What can be afoot now?" said Dr. Thistlewood, when this strangely assorted couple had disappeared. "Do you know that all the time you were talking to that man, he was not aware of a single word you said? Nothing would have surprised me less than to have seen him drop down fainting."

"Good God!" exclaimed Lord Cotswold, "you don't say so? I thought that, for a clergyman, he was listening to me with unusual patience. What has happened to him? Is he ill? Or has that case of his friend, which you and he were discussing together, disturbed him?"

"You say," replied Dr. Thistlewood, "that Mr. Barton listened to you patiently. That case has so disturbed him that he is beyond the reach of impatience. Facts conflicting with faith, which, if the reason of the believer views them from a distance, and as a spectator only, are passed by him and forgotten like the death of a distant soldier, have entered this man through his own personal sympathies, and have torn him like an explosive bullet. There is in his creed no poppy or mandragora which will ever medicine Mr. Barton to his old repose."

"Indeed," said Lord Cotswold. "What you tell me is interesting.

If his faith is mortally wounded, I should mourn for it as for a lost friend. But, my dear Gustav, I believe that your fears are needless. In the case of men like Mr. Barton, faith is beyond the reach, not of wounds, perhaps, but of mortal wounds. It may be stunned, but it will not die, and its life after every blow will be yet more obstinate than before. Look at them—those two. They have left the conservatory, and are down there on the terrace. What do you suppose she is saying to him? Hark!" continued Lord Cotswold, who was now standing by the window. "I hear wheels. It is probably the Cliff's End waggonette. And now, the conference is over; Lady Conway and her clergyman are coming back. You stay here, and give Lady Conway her coffee. I will meet the others in the drawing-room."

Lady Conway on her return was all satisfaction and affability. Dr. Thistlewood, who watched Mr. Barton narrowly, saw that he still maintained his air of preternatural composure. He said little, however, till Dr. Thistlewood judged it prudent to observe that the party from Cliff's End were arriving, "and possibly," so he added, "Sir Rawlin Stantor with them."

Mr. Barton reddened for a moment, and shifted uneasily in his seat.

"Come," said Lady Conway, "I must go and meet my cousin Susie. I shall probably not do so again for another twenty years. Dr. Gustav, you go first. I have one word more for Mr. Barton. Listen," she said. "As a friend, let me whisper to you one bit of counsel. A fowl of the air has hinted to me—I dare say it's not true, for fowls of the air are more inaccurate even than the daughters of men—that you were supposed to take a special interest in one of your own spiritual pupils here. If you have any inclination to do this, be advised by me, and don't. I won't breathe a word against the young lady herself; but her associations are most unfortunate. That sister of hers, who was staying here when I was away—I don't know if you saw her—but, I can tell you, I have friends at Nice, and those friends have friends in England—and—well, Mr. Barton, if I were to tell you all that I know about her, and all that other people know, I should drive you out of your own confessional. You might advise her and absolve her three times a week; but nothing would make her possible as an English clergyman's sister-in-law. Just think that over. I must hasten to embrace my kinswoman."

Mr. Barton, as soon as she was gone, sank into a chair groaning, but immediately started up again, biting his lips, and composing himself. He had erected a temporary dam against the flood of his own thoughts. This might break down later. He was coldly resolved that it should not break down now. He lit a cigarette, he examined the pattern of the curtains, and began to consider the possibility of escaping unobserved by the terrace.

Meanwhile the Cliff's End party had already assembled in the drawing-room. Oswald was sauntering apart, happy now in the conviction that he might compromise Lady Conway if he insisted on sticking too close to her. Mr. Hugh had obtained permission to re-examine Dr. Thistlewood's bioscope; and Sir Rawlin, who had, at Lady Susannah's request, come with the others in order that he might amuse Miss Vivian, was talking to her with a confidential *empressement*, which he would have himself condemned as dangerous, had he not been touched by the thought of how her dejected spirits had last night revived under the touch of his own kindliness.

He very soon felt, however, the need of vigilant prudence, when, the company having passed into the music-room, he found himself standing by her side on the steps leading down into the conservatory.

"Didn't I," she said, "go down there on that night of the thunderstorm? I seem to remember some palms and chairs very vaguely. Let me go and look about for myself. You stay here, and wait for me. You won't go away, will you?"

She was dressed as she was on the day when he first met her in the hockey-field; only now there swam in her eyes an appeal which was then dormant. Her figure swayed a little as she spoke, and in the act of committing herself to the steps, it brushed gently against his own.

Sir Rawlin was a little uneasy, but not seriously alarmed. He saw her red cap disappear amongst the green foliage. He seated himself near the window and waited, congratulating himself, not without a pang of sadness, on the fact that he too, together with Lady Conway, was pledged next morning to escort Oswald to London.

If Sir Rawlin had feared that the objects which Miss Vivian was now inspecting might bring back to her consciousness any memories inconveniently definite, his fears were without foundation. A vague and dreamy tenderness did, nevertheless, stir in her; and her feet, she knew not why, began to stray along the flower-bordered passage which led to the scene of the forgotten and lost catastrophe. She was moving slowly, pausing to inspect the flowers, when a sound roused her, and she was face to face with Mr. Barton.

He made no offer to shake hands with her. His nails were digging themselves into his palms, and he even lacked voice to acknowledge her simple ejaculation of his name. He merely fixed on her the haggard scrutiny of his eyes.

Her last night's letter to him had met with no response. Half hurt, and half fearful that she had displeased him, and not having expected his presence there, she sought to disguise her embarrassment by a touch of self-protective flippancy.

"I suppose," she said, "you got that little note of mine! Don't trouble about answering it. But I thought I would tell you you were

right when you said I didn't know my own mind. I don't know why you should care, though; and I dare say it was silly of me to trouble you."

Mr. Barton at first said nothing; and then, as though the quivering words were forced from him—

"You don't know!" he exclaimed—"you don't know why I should care! Girl, have your eyes been blind? Have you never known how I love you?"

Had the man discharged a pistol at her she could hardly have presented to him a more complete image of consternation.

"You!" she said incredulously, as soon as she could find her voice—"you do what? You love me? You, a saint, a priest? Mr. Barton, you must be ill. Let me forget this. You can't know what you're saying."

Mr. Barton's consternation for a moment was hardly less acute than hers; but one additional pain soon lost itself in the rest. The first furrow which had ploughed itself between his brows subsided; and when, after a hint of hesitation, she turned round and moved away from him, he remained motionless where he was, and watched her retreating figure. He might have remained there longer if his half-stupefied consciousness had not become aware of a certain unsteadiness in her movements. Once or twice a hand, under whose glove a scar must have been still hiding, gleamed and rested on a flower-pot, as though without a support she felt herself in danger of falling. He was slow to notice this, and as soon as he did so he began to hasten after her. He was, however, still some dozen paces behind her when she had reached the conservatory steps. Then she noticeably faltered, for a man came down to meet her. She said nothing. She uttered no exclamation. She merely made a graceful gesture of weariness; and, slipping her hand within the arm of Sir Rawlin Stantor, she almost but not quite leant her red cap and her pale cheek against his shoulder. A clump of fan-palm offered to Mr. Barton the means of escaping unnoticed into the open air. The unhappy man, moving rigidly as though jerked by clockwork, diverged into the shadow of this friendly screen, and went.

"Come, come, what is the matter now?" The words were Dr. Thistlewood's. "Is this young lady tired? Allow me, Sir Rawlin, to have a look at her. It is those bad nights that are to blame for this. This will never do at all. Sir Rawlin, leave her to me. Now, Miss Nest, there's nobody looking, and Sir Rawlin will not betray you. You come along with me, and I'll take you somewhere where you can sit down and be quiet."

With a masterly and persuasive haste he induced the girl to accompany him, and succeeded in hurrying her through the big room of the gramophone, hardly observed by Mr. Hugo, who was

playing there with his own kaleidoscope, and he disappeared with her safely into the quiet region beyond.

Mr. Hugo worked away, and presently with the aid of a blow-pipe he set himself to re-solder a defective joint in his instrument, communicating to the air around him a slight smell of acid. Nothing recalled his thoughts to Miss Vivian's recent transit, but a sound of voices which for a moment came to him through a half-open door. The voices were suggestive of vivacity pitting itself against command or expostulation. Mr. Hugo listened, laughed a little, and then went on with his work. He was still so employed, when Lady Conway, escorted by Oswald, showed herself tentatively in the doorway, and informed the young savant that she was looking for Mr. Barton. "I don't think," said Mr. Hugo, with modest self-satisfaction, "that he is likely to be hiding in my neighbourhood. Indeed, my presence tends to exorcise him."

"Well," said Lady Conway, "if that fluid in a tumbler is your holy water, don't try to exorcise me with it. I'm not going to disturb you. I'm going to say good-bye. Don't get up, Mr. Hugo; I'm only going to *say* it. When you're in London, come and lunch with me, if you can manage to get your hands clean, and tell me some more about the sun and the earth's shadow. Ah!" she exclaimed, as Dr. Thistlewood reappeared through the farther door, "where have you been hiding yourself? I'm trying to make my adieux to Lord Cotswold, to you, and to everybody, and to carry off my spiritual director, if I only knew where to find him."

"Your spiritual director," said Dr. Thistlewood, "is gone. I, too, am looking for somebody—I am looking for Lady Susannah. That young lady of hers is not quite so well as we might wish her to be. I must keep her here for an hour or two, and send her back in the evening. You, Mr. Oswald Arundel, be a good fellow and find your aunt for me. And you, Lady Conway, you're surely in no great hurry. Wait till the rest are gone, and then come back to the smoking-room, and let you and me and his lordship have a few more words before parting."

"Well," said Lady Conway, "have it your own way. If you want my cousin Susie, I think she's with Lord Cotswold in the music-room. Oswald, open the door. Your dear aunt is in great request."

Lady Conway was right. Lady Susannah was found. Dr. Thistlewood went up to her, and at once drew her aside.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that your niece was hardly strong enough to come here to-day. She's tired. She's lying down; and to-night she had much better stay here. Don't disturb her; but as soon as you get home, send her maid with whatever things may be necessary."

The signs of alarm and concern which Lady Susannah was beginning to manifest, Dr. Thistlewood contrived to suppress by the sedative equability of his manner.

"Ah, my dear Susie," said Lady Conway, "are you going? I'll come out to the door with you. Dr. Gustav, you and Lord Cotswold can go back to your tower. You can trust me to find my way there. And you, Oswald, go and collect Sir Rawlin, if he hasn't departed, like Mr. Barton, without the ceremony of a few last words."

"I wanted, my dear Gustav," said Lord Cotswold, as soon as they were left alone, "to finish what I was saying to you about the future of our friend Mr. Barton. You say he's been agitated and distracted by the mental malady of his friend. That I can well believe. But when you tell me that this disturbance will have any permanent effect on him, then I entirely differ from you. Faith with men of his type is a form of mental obstinacy invincible by the assaults of knowledge. Obstinacy like this may to us seem the obstinacy of folly. In part it may be so, but it is something else besides. If logic, if reason, if evidence, were the sole supports of faith, the old faiths by which men have lived would decompose far more rapidly than any new faiths could construct themselves. In times like these in which our own lot has been cast, the whole continuity of the world's higher life would be broken, if the Churches and men like Mr. Barton, who represent their spirit, were not ready, in defiance of reason and evidence, to protect the existing bottles while the new are being slowly fabricated; and what will be the new bottles that will hold your hopes and mine, or of what material they will be made, neither you nor I can conjecture. Ah, Lady Conway, so your ecclesiastic is really gone? I hope you did not frighten him away."

"No," said Lady Conway, "it is quite the other way about. But this fortune of his has for the moment turned his head—not with pride—I don't mean that at all, but by worry over business; and about business, as I know to my cost, most clergymen know nothing. But Mr. Barton will very soon be equal to all occasions. He had thought everything out. I was surprised by the clearness of his ideas, and the promptness with which he expressed them. This was flattering to my own vanity. I have long had an eye on Mr. Barton, as fitted for something more important than preaching to old women at Southquay, and drinking tea with them afterwards; and now, with this money of his, his equipment as an apostle is complete. I have just been able to offer him, on behalf of my own dear lord, the living of St. Stephens—the place is on our property, just outside Manningham. There are thirty thousand people in the parish—a magnificent church to be decorated, mission-halls to be varnished, and ten thousand

radicals to be humanized by the ministrations of an ascetic conservative. Mr. Barton leapt at the proposal. There was something almost uncanny in his eagerness. The Bishop will be delighted. I wrote to him a week ago about it, and I sent him a copy, cut out of a Southquay paper, of a sermon which Mr. Barton preached here. I think it was on the subject of Confirmation. I'm no judge of sermons myself, so I take my opinions from my superiors. The Bishop thinks that Mr. Barton will be an admirable man for refuting some of the professors at the new Manningham University, who attack doctrines of the Church, he says, simply because they do not understand them. Ah, Oswald, you're back again. So Sir Rawlin says he is coming, does he? Well, he takes his time. And you, Mr. Hugo, you too? By the way—that cousin of yours——"

"Yes," said Dr. Thistlewood, "that cousin of his. I must go and have another look at her."

"Is she really ill, or what?" Lady Conway continued, as soon as Dr. Thistlewood was gone. "As for these doctors, they never will tell me anything."

"No," said Mr. Hugo, with an air of condescending wisdom. "I don't think there's much the matter with her; for I happened to hear her in the passage talking to Dr. Thistlewood. It seemed to me that she was very much alive indeed; and she was doing what I certainly never heard her do before. She was giving him an imitation of Enid, about whom she never spoke a word. It made me laugh as I listened. I really could have fancied it was Enid herself come back again."

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